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INTRODUCTION



View of Ang Mo Kio Town Centre, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

The name “Ang Mo Kio” has no definitive origin. Some say it comes from the Hokkien term for tomatoes, while others believe it was named after a red-haired Caucasian or a bridge. Whatever the case may be, Ang Mo Kio is now a well-known Housing & Development Board (HDB) heartland in Singapore, with its own unique character and home to iconic parks, hidden hawker gems, and a vintage dragon playground.

Before its transformation into a housing town, Ang Mo Kio was once plantation and farming land. Like many other rural parts in Singapore, it was first settled by gambier and pepper farmers in the early 1800s before these plantations gave way to rubber estates in the late 19th century. By the early 20th century, there were reports of vegetable farms and fruit orchards, as well as various villages established by Chinese pioneers.

In those days, residents would refer to this area as Kow Tiow Kio (“nine bridges” in Hokkien) rather than Ang Mo Kio, as one would have to cross nine bridges across tributary streams of the Kallang River to get from present-day Lorong Chuan to Upper Thomson Road. Former villagers recall Kow Tiow Kio as a picturesque area with undulating hillocks, meandering streams, farms, and ponds filled with water hyacinths and lotus.

As the seventh new town built by HDB, Ang Mo Kio’s transformation took place later than areas such as Toa Payoh and Queenstown. Kampong memories remain strong even today among former villagers, many of whom were resettled in the new town in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The village temples, which have since established themselves in new buildings in Ang Mo Kio’s neighbourhoods, continue to serve as meeting points for Kow Tiow Kio’s former kampong communities.

At the same time, Ang Mo Kio has grown a distinct identity of its own over the past decades as a new town. It is HDB’s first town to be built in metric dimensions, home to Singapore’s one and only public housing block with circular apartments, and where the concept of town councils was piloted. Long-time residents reminisce fondly of the former Oriental Emporium and Ang Mo Kio’s cinemas in the 1980s while exciting new developments such as AMK Hub enable the town to evolve and remain relevant for younger generations of Singaporeans.

Discover these memories and more on this self-guided trail of Ang Mo Kio, which brings you on a journey to learn about stories of old and visit icons of the new town!

EARLY HISTORY

Little is known of the area now known as “Ang Mo Kio” in the precolonial era. Although there are many theories about the origins of the district’s name, it remains a mystery today. However, historic maps, reports and oral histories from former residents have shed some light on the landscape of the area and who some of the early settlers here were.

ANG MO KIO IN THE 19TH CENTURY

One of the earliest mentions of Ang Mo Kio was in 1844, when Government Surveyor John Turnbull Thomson embarked on surveying the island of Singapore and mapped out a district called “Amokiah”. Land lots were clearly drawn and a little settlement named “Amokiah” was even labelled along present-day Upper Serangoon Road. This district, whose official boundaries changed over time, extended from Thomson Road on the west and Yio Chu Kang Road on the north, to Serangoon Road on the east and Braddell Road on the south. In some other survey maps, the southern boundary was the Kallang River.

By 1855, the name “Ang Mo Kio” was used interchangeably with “Amokiah”. In that year, it was reported that surveyors had visited

plantations in several districts in Singapore, including Ang Mo Kio, and had found gambier trees, pepper vines, nutmeg trees, and small patches of indigo being cultivated in rural Singapore.

Most likely, “Amokiah” and “Ang Mo Kio” were attempts at transliterating an existing local place name, which was taken from the original Amokiah Village, later labelled Ang Mo Kio Village, at Serangoon Road.

For much of the 19th century, mention of this district in the press or archival records was limited. Based on maps of the period, the area was covered with plantations and forests, suggesting that early settlers of these plantations were likely Teochew Chinese, since predominantly Teochew settlers had established pepper and gambier plantations in other rural districts of Singapore and in the region.

There were archival newspaper articles that also point to the presence of Chinese Catholic settlers in the area during this time. In 1851, it was reported that a Chinese Catholic planter by the name of Tan Ah Choon was kidnapped and robbed by other Chinese near Amokiah during the anti-Catholic riots that year, when Chinese secret societies attacked and burnt plantations owned by Chinese Catholics. Another interesting note is that in 1883, the English Presbyterian Mission established a chapel near Amokiah Village to cater to the Teochew community in the area. Amokiah Village was the only sizeable settlement noted in maps then. This suggests that the early settlers in the area and in Amokiah Village could be Teochew Chinese, and the term “Amokiah”, or “Ang Mo Kio” is likely a Teochew term.



Survey map by J. T. Thomson, showing a settlement called “Amokiah” along Serangoon Road near the present-day Wolskel Road area, 1844
All rights reserved. The British Library, 2017

AN UNDULATING TERRAIN

Early 20th century maps of Ang Mo Kio have shown that the district was covered



Map showing Amokiah Village, with small structures clustered around the main Serangoon Road, and some cultivated plots, 1849
 Survey department, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Typical gambier and pepper plantation in early Singapore, 1900s
 National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board



Pepper plantation in Singapore, 19th century
 National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board

with several hills over 30 metres tall and numerous tributaries that fed into Kallang River and swamps in low-lying areas. Former General Manager of Bukit Sembawang Estates Douglas Hiorns (b. 1925) who arrived in Ang Mo Kio in the post-war years, recorded the following observations:

"... within the enormously large area of Yio Chu Kang Road, Upper Serangoon Road, Braddell Road and Upper Thomson Road, prior to the development by the HDB, this was when I first arrived, there was hardly any infrastructure within that area. No roads, or any public utilities. The topography was natural, undulating. There were hills, hillocks, swamps, streams, plantations, every type of crop that you can imagine. It was totally natural, if I can call it that, very natural. And this persisted even right until the development of Ang Mo Kio."

By the turn of the 20th century, Ang Mo Kio's gambier and pepper plantations had given way

to rubber plantations. A 1924 map provides a glimpse into Ang Mo Kio, with rubber plantations covering much of the district, and vegetable farms and small coconut plantations scattered around the area. Vegetable cultivation mostly took place in lower-lying areas such as around the tributaries of Kallang River along present-day Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1, as water would be more readily available there. Ponds could also be found in the valleys and would have been used to rear fish or collect rainwater. A quarry was also indicated in the area near present-day Sembawang Hills.

HOKKIEN SETTLERS AND NEW PLACE NAMES

In the early 1900s, several Hokkien Chinese villages were established in the north-central region of Singapore, from Thomson Road and Yio Chu Kang to Ang Mo Kio. These villages were home to people from Anxi county in China. For those living in the area that is now



Map showing location of Ang Mo Kio Village, 1937
National Library of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

DELVING INTO THE NAME “ANG MO KIO”

At the junction of Ang Mo Kio Avenue 3 and Ang Mo Kio Central 1, a pair of giant red tomato sculptures nestle in the grass as a tongue-in-cheek reference to the town’s name, which sounds similar to the local Hokkien and Teochew term for tomatoes, which is *ang mo kio*. The origin of the town’s name has confounded locals for years and explanations have ranged from tomatoes and red-haired Caucasians to bridges.

While one of the most common theories for the area’s name is that tomatoes used to be planted there, tomatoes are not known to have been grown in Singapore, much less Ang Mo Kio, as the fruit does not thrive well in tropical climates. Instead, former farmers from the area reported growing mainly leafy vegetables, sugarcane, and later, tapioca and sweet potato.

Another theory was that the term “Ang Mo” (“red hair” in Hokkien, a local term referring to Caucasians) in Ang Mo Kio referred to John Turnbull Thomson, who was said to have contributed to the development of a Red Bridge which carried Kampong Java Road across the Kallang River. Accordingly, locals may have dubbed the area Ang Mo Kio (“red-haired Caucasian’s bridge”) after Thomson and the Red Bridge. This is, however, unlikely given that the Red Bridge (near Kadang Kerbau Women’s and Children’s Hospital today) was located far from the original Amokiah Village at Serangoon and the term “Amokiah” was documented by Thomson himself in 1844, before the bridge was constructed.

A further theory was that the name referred to a concrete bridge located near present-day Lorong Chuan, carrying Cheng San Road over a tributary of Kallang River. As the term for concrete is called “Ang Mo He” and bridge is called “Kio” in Hokkien, the name “Ang Mo

Kio” could have been a truncated reference to the concrete bridge. Again, however, this is unlikely as the appearance of the name “Amokiah” and “Ang Mo Kio” predated the building of bridges in the area.

While there are no conclusive explanations for the name “Ang Mo Kio”, a 1938 news article provides a clue. It was reported that “previously unnamed, some of 60 villages in Singapore, are to be called after well-known Singapore Chinese who have earned public recognition by their work. Along Yio Chu Kang Road, a village will be called Chia Keng Village; along Thomson Road, Ang Mo Kio Village.” Though the village named Ang Mo Kio was located along Thomson Road instead of the original location at Upper Serangoon Road, this suggests that “Ang Mo Kio” was likely the name of a Chinese pioneer in the northern area of Singapore.



Tomato sculptures in Ang Mo Kio
Courtesy of National Heritage Board



Typical rubber plantation in Singapore, 1900s
 Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1, their village was referred to as Kow Tiow Kio, which means “nine bridges” in Hokkien. This name came from the former nine bridges that one had to cross while walking along a path from Thomson Road to present-day Lorong Chuan. The bridges were constructed of metal and laid with wooden planks.

Another name for the area was Chwee Arm Lor, which means “water pipe road” in Hokkien. This name referred to the path that ran parallel to the big water pipes laid by the colonial government to carry water from Peirce Reservoir (present-day Lower Peirce Reservoir) to the town.

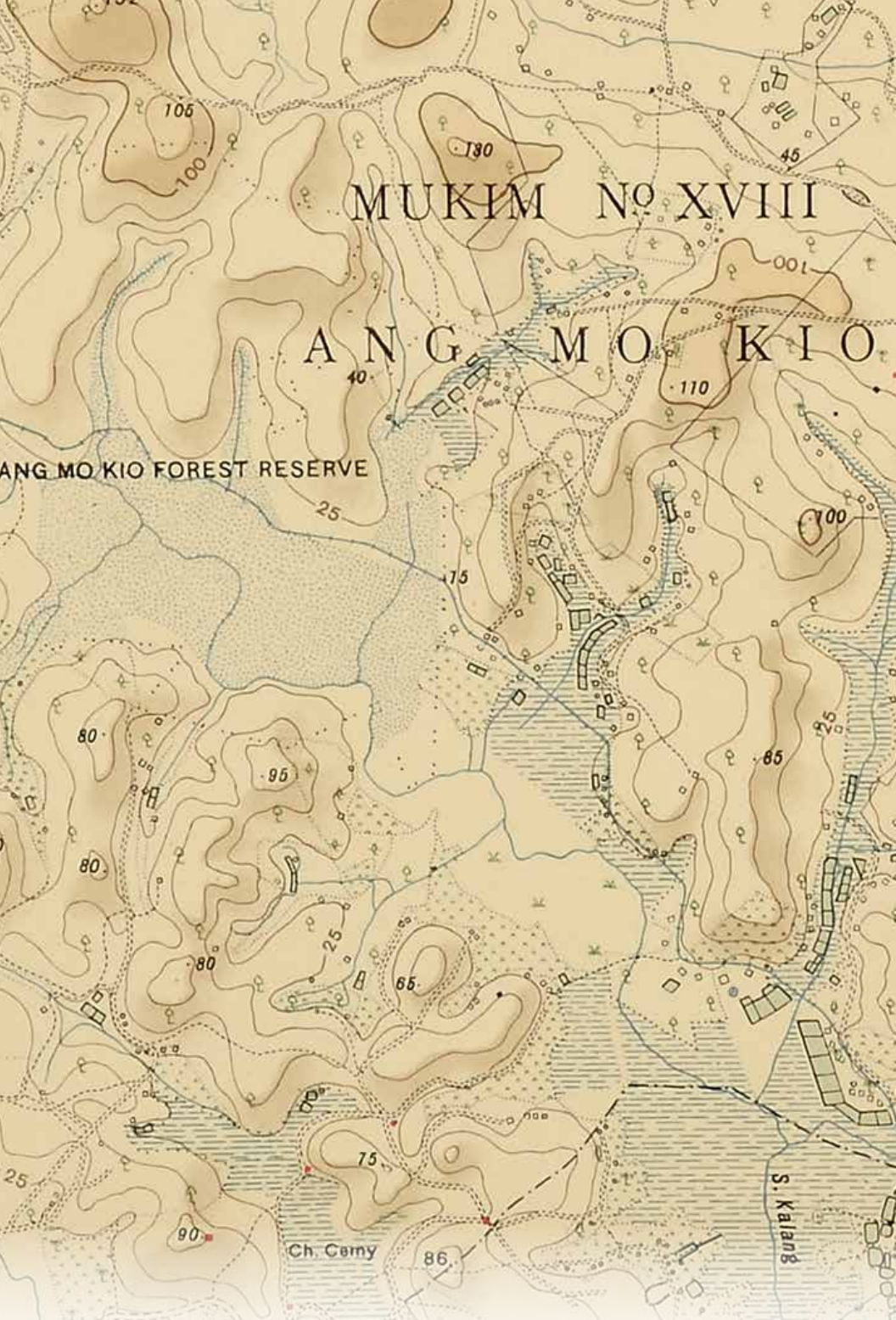
These two names, Kow Tiow Kio and Chwee Arm Lor, were used interchangeably by the villagers to refer to their kampong. The villages in Kow Tiow Kio were eventually resettled in the 1970s to make way for the development of Ang Mo Kio New Town.

In addition to the general names Kow Tiow Kio and Chwee Arm Lor, there were also specific place names for different locales along the path. The area that is now Sembawang Hills

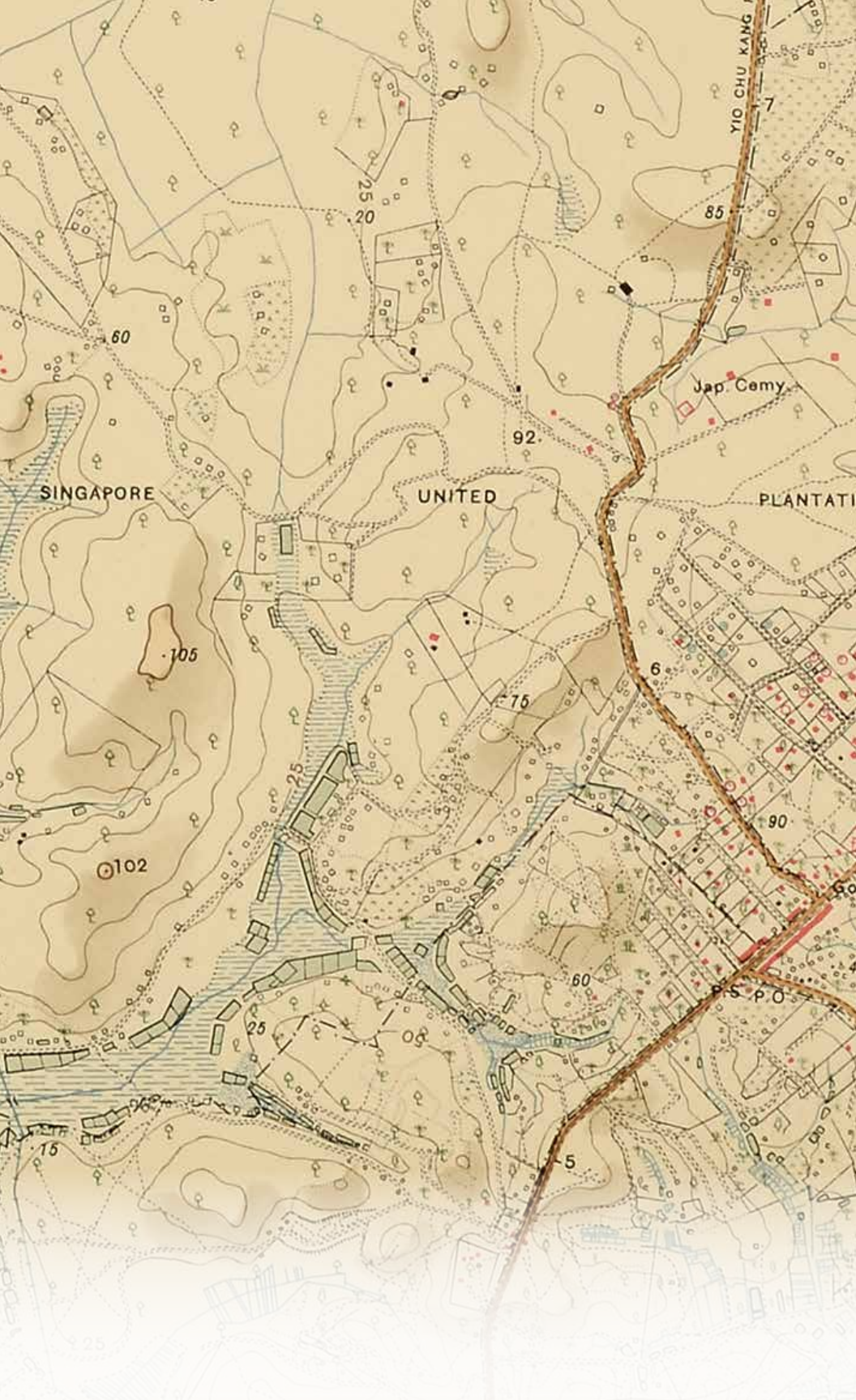
and Mayflower Gardens was called Cheok Sua, which means “rock hill” in Hokkien. The area was known to be rocky, and there was a quarry for red rock there. The rock was said to have been mined to pave roads in Singapore.

The swathe of land around Thomson Road up to present-day Ang Mo Kio West Garden was called Lao Pah, which means “the old plantation” in Hokkien. The land from Ang Mo Kio West Garden eastwards was called Sin Pah, which means “the new plantation” in Hokkien. Presumably, this referred to the order in which the land was cleared for cultivation. Part of Sin Pah was also called Cheng Sua Lai or Cheng San by locals, which means “interior of the green hills” and “green hills” in Hokkien respectively.

Right at the first Kow Tiow Kio’s nine bridges, located near present-day Lorong Chuan, the village was called Lelong Pah. The story goes that the land in that area was selling for cheap because the former rubber and pineapple plantations there did not do well. The village was thus named Lelong Pah, which means “bargain or sold for cheap” in



Map showing Kallang River near present-day Lorong Chuan area where the first bridge was located, with hills, streams and plantations in the surrounding areas, 1924
Courtesy of The National Archives, United Kingdom



YIO CHU KANG

7

85

60

25
20

SINGAPORE

UNITED

PLANTATIONS

Jap. Cem.

92

105

75

102

25

6

90

60

S.P.O.

25

05

5

15

25

Malay and “plantation” in Hokkien. It was later transliterated as “Li Nong Village” in Mandarin.

According to Tan Chye Yee (b. 1913), who immigrated from Anxi, China, in 1917 and settled in Lelong Pah with his family, the area was already populated by his kinsmen when he arrived. The majority of the villagers were reported to have the surname Tan. Teo Kian Chow (b. 1929) was another early immigrant from Anxi. He stayed on the other end of Kow Tiow Kio near Upper Thomson Road and recalled that his grandparents first worked in the area’s rubber plantations.

LIFE IN THE PRE-WAR DAYS

Life in Kow Tiow Kio revolved primarily around farming. Many of the villagers worked at the rubber plantations in the early morning and tended to their farms in the afternoon. Fish-rearing was also common, and there were around a hundred ponds filled with mainly grass carp and bighead carp in Lelong Pah alone. Cantonese middlemen from outside of Kow Tiow Kio would come regularly to collect the fish to sell at Ellenborough Market.

From the few oral history accounts with former villagers, it seemed that the villagers largely kept to the way of life they had known in China. Tan recalled that many of the women in Lelong Pah had bound feet when he arrived. Birthdays were usually celebrated only when one hit the old age of 50 or 60 years. Then, the family would prepare special dishes such as longevity noodles, pig trotters, and hard-boiled eggs. The most important festival of the year was Chinese New Year. Families would make sure to prepare a set of new clothes for every member, and the families in Lelong Pah would steam confections such as *ang ku kueh* (“red tortoise confection” in Hokkien, a steamed confection with peanut or green bean paste as filling). Villagers would drink Anxi tea and considered sweeping the floor or emptying chamber pots to be taboo until the fifth day of the new year. For mid-autumn’s festival, families would buy Hokkien-style mooncakes, which were big, flat, and round, each

weighing two to three catties (about 1.2 – 1.8 kilogram).

Marriage rituals in the village often took more than a year to complete. Tan recalled that in his case, it took a year and a half from matchmaking until marriage. Matchmade at the age of 24, Tan had never met his wife before that. Rituals and ceremonies were observed with care. Tan had to carry sweets and treats to his future in-laws’ house as part of betrothal, and an astrologer was engaged to determine all the auspicious dates and times for the various wedding customs such as the bride taking the sedan chair. Big lanterns were hung outside his house to announce his marriage.

Funerals in those days were also a village affair. The coffin would have to be borne by 30 pallbearers taking turns, and likely travelled down Thomson Road and Lornie Road, all the way to Kheam Hock Road at Bukit Brown. Two small candles would be placed along the main road near the deceased’s house to notify neighbours of the death, and candles would be distributed. Offerings for the dead often included a replica of a sedan chair, a symbol of luxury and status then.

SINGAPORE’S SECOND IMPOUNDING RESERVOIR

Originally known as Kalang River Reservoir, Peirce Reservoir was completed in 1910 to meet the need for more potable water which had increased significantly by the late 1800s. The water supplied by Thomson Road Reservoir, as MacRitchie Reservoir was known then, was no longer sufficient.

In the late 1800s, the government planned a tunnel to divert water from Kallang River to Thomas Road Reservoir. After repeated delays, the tunnel was finally completed in 1907 and added another 1.5 million gallons to

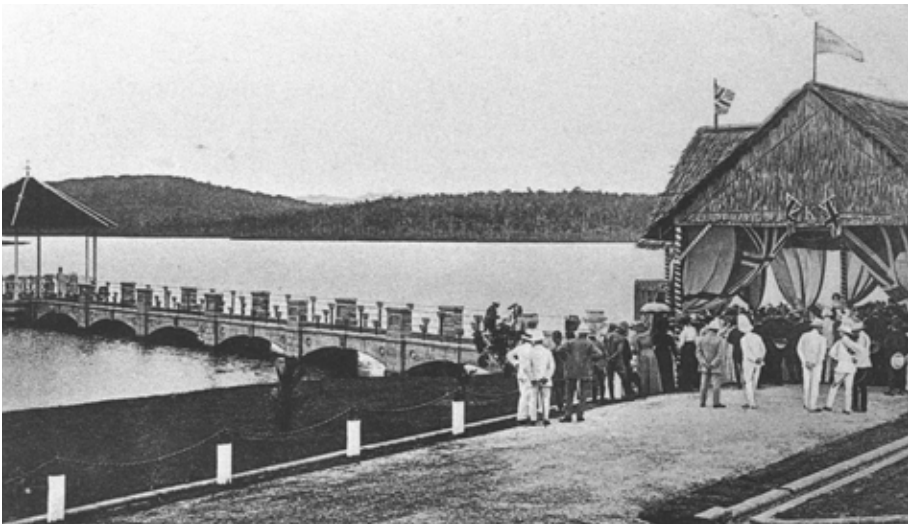
the town's water supply. During the project, municipal engineer Robert Peirce proposed in 1902 that a second impounding reservoir be built on Kallang River, as he projected that the tunnel would not suffice to meet the water demand.

The project was undertaken by Westminster Construction company and works on the second impounding reservoir began a few years later. It was reported that the dam was completed in 1910 and filter beds for the reservoir, located at Woodleigh, were finished in 1911. Water was first drawn in February 1911 and the reservoir began supplying the town in December that year.

The official opening ceremony was held on 26 March 1912 and graced by Governor Sir Arthur Henderson Young. An inscription stone specially imported from Aswan, Egypt, was erected. The municipal commissioners also presented the governor with a model of the reservoir in silver, made by a firm in Canton, China.

The reservoir was renamed in 1922 as Peirce Reservoir in honour of the municipal engineer who developed the plans for the project. In 1970, Public Utilities Board began feasibility checks around the reservoir with the intention of enlarging it and a new site on the upper tributary of Kallang River was chosen. Completed in 1975, the new reservoir was named Upper Peirce Reservoir, and Peirce Reservoir was accordingly renamed Lower Peirce.

The water pipes laid to bring water from the reservoir ran along Kow Tiow Kio, giving rise to the local name Chwee Arm Lor ("water pipe road" in Hokkien). Oh Cheng Kiat (b. 1965) grew up at Kow Tiow Kio along present-day Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1 near Mayflower estate. He recalled, "I remember when there were heavy rains, water would be released from Peirce Reservoir. The whole kampong would then flood. After the rain, every family would have to go around looking for their animals such as pigs and chickens swept away by the flood!"



Official opening of Peirce Reservoir, formerly known as Kalang River Reservoir, 1912
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

WARTIME MEMORIES

The idyllic kampong life, however, was abruptly disrupted with the advent of war. In the 1920s and 1930s, the British had already begun preparations for war in the region. For a brief period, the government considered building a large military hospital in Ang Mo Kio given its location in the centre of the island and accessibility to military stations and the air and naval bases in Seletar. However, the plan was soon abandoned.

PLACE OF REFUGE

When invasion of Malaya began in December 1941, Ang Mo Kio, like other parts of rural Singapore, was seen as a place of refuge. Many Hainanese working in the Sembawang naval base fled to Ang Mo Kio for safety. Sim Chin Sen (b. 1938), who grew up at the stretch of Kow Tiow Kio near present-day Sin Ming Road, remembers Hainanese families who moved to his village then.

Chua Ah Kuan (b. 1911), a Hokkien Chinese, was one of those who fled from town to Ang Mo Kio after Singapore fell in February 1942. Together with a friend, Chua made his way on foot disguised as an itinerant tea seller, as movement was controlled during the occupation. The duo finally arrived after a day of walking and managed to lease a plot of land from a farming family in Sin Pah. There, they built a hut and began growing crops such as sugarcane, brinjal, long beans, chili, and bamboo.

Even though Ang Mo Kio was safer compared to the town area, residents were still not spared the hardships of war. Marcus Toh (b. 1967), who grew up in Lao Pah, shares that his second granduncle housed a British soldier briefly after Singapore fell and was later arrested by Japanese forces in the middle of the night and never seen again. Sim Chin Sen witnessed the Japanese arresting an Indian man, tying him up, and beating him until he bled. It was also

reported that over a hundred villagers were taken away by the Japanese during Operation Sook Ching, where the Japanese aimed to identify and eliminate anti-Japanese elements. The villagers were interrogated near Peirce reservoir for a day and a night. Thereafter, only around 70 of them were released and the remaining never returned.

GROWING MORE FOOD

During the Japanese Occupation, food shortage was a persistent challenge. The Japanese thus launched a campaign to promote food self-sufficiency. Residents were encouraged to grow their own food in every vacant lot available. Even the Padang in town was converted to growing tapioca.

For Singapore's farmers, they had to meet quotas in terms of the weight of vegetables delivered to the Japanese. According to Chua Ah Kuan, he had to turn in 400 Chinese catties, or around 200 kilograms of vegetables every month. In return, the Japanese would give him 10 catties of rice for every 200 catties of vegetables. Another farmer in Ang Mo Kio reported that he had to deliver 70 catties of vegetables every day. The Japanese also cut down many of the rubber trees in Ang Mo Kio to make way for farming. Ang Mo Kio's fish ponds stopped operating as villagers no longer had resources to sustain the fisheries.

To meet the quota, farmers grew high-yielding crops such as sweet potatoes and tapioca. Those who could not meet the quota were allotted more land to work on. Chua recounted, "As farmers, during the occupation, we had food to eat. Sweet potatoes, tapioca, rice ... Sometimes there were others who came to buy tapioca and sweet potatoes from us. In those days, tapioca and sweet potatoes were very precious. People who came would very politely say, 'Please dig up 10 catties to sell to me, we don't have anything to cook with



Typical tapioca plantation in Singapore, c.1880s
National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board

at home.' Thinking back, it was a pitiful scene. So as farmers, we did not suffer as much, we could be full."

Besides sweet potatoes and tapioca, some farming families were said to make *chiu nee mee* ("rubber noodles" in Hokkien) to supplement their diet. Such noodles were made from rubber sap and cooked in palm oil. They were said to smell fishy and were unpleasant to eat. According to locals, the rubber noodles could not be eaten with vinegar as they would harden and become indigestible, and there were claims that people had died eating *chiu nee mee* this way.

Despite the hardship, life went on for the villagers of Ang Mo Kio. The village temples continued to hold their festivities and stage opera performances. Chua shared, "During the occupation, very few, there were very

few people selling food. If there were *wayang* stages put up, I would cut up the sugarcane, and peddle them there. They sold very well."

It was at one such temple festival that Chua met his future wife. According to Chua and other wartime survivors, families then were under pressure to marry off their daughters as unmarried women were at risk of being conscripted into Japanese initiatives such as nursing training programmes. Chua's wife came from an educated family while Chua did not. However, during the occupation, ensuring comparable social statuses in marriages was no longer a priority. Instead, farmers such as Chua were considered a good match as they could provide food. Chua went on to have 11 children, and they lived in Sin Pah, near present-day Ang Mo Kio Street 32, until they were resettled in the late 1970s.

RECOVERING FROM DIFFICULT TIMES

On 12 September 1945, the Japanese surrendered, and the occupation finally came to an end. The years of food shortage had taken a toll on the populace, with many left malnourished and ill. Chua recalled that people began raiding Japanese warehouses to look for food. At 4th milestone Serangoon Road (near present-day Wolskel Road), the Japanese were using the Hock Ann Brickworks building as a rice store. Chua went with fellow villagers from Ang Mo Kio to raid the store, even though there were British troops guarding the place. While Chua managed to grab a 160-catty bag of rice and escaped with it, there were those who were shot by the guards.

Over time, Ang Mo Kio's villages began easing back into life as they knew it before the war. A major difference, however, was that the population had become more culturally diverse after the war. Many of the families who fled to Ang Mo Kio to seek refuge were non-Hokkien Chinese and had resettled in the area.

For over a decade after the war, the Chinese community, represented by a committee comprising eminent members such as businessman Tay Koh Yat, mulled over building a memorial in Ang Mo Kio to commemorate the Chinese massacred by the Japanese. Mass graves of victims were regularly discovered on the island and it was proposed that these remains be reinterred in one site and a memorial park be built there. The first site proposed was in Bukit Timah, but due to the difficulty in securing the land needed, in 1949, the committee accepted the government's offer of a site at 5¾ milestone Thomson Road, Ang Mo Kio (present-day Sin Ming area) instead. The memorial park was planned to include a mausoleum, a park, and a memorial, with local architect Ng Keng Siang (1908-1967) as the designer. However, by the 1960s, the government and the committee had decided to build the memorial on its present site along Beach Road, and the planned memorial at Ang Mo Kio was not realised.

A HIDDEN CACHE OF ARTWORKS IN LELONG PAH

Renowned for his ink paintings of horses and birds, Chinese artist Xu Beihong (1895-1953) was also passionate about raising funds for the Sino-Japanese war. Between 1939 and 1942, Xu frequently travelled to Southeast Asia, holding art exhibitions to support the war efforts. When Japan began invading Malaya in 1941, Xu was in Singapore, having just held an exhibition to raise funds.

Knowing that Xu would be a marked man if Singapore fell, Xu's friends, many of whom were prominent members of Singapore Ann Kway Association active in anti-Japanese efforts, arranged for him to take shelter at Lelong Pah, hoping that the remoteness of the village would help him evade surveillance.

Zhong Qing Hai, principal of Chong Boon Chinese School, himself a calligrapher, arranged for Xu to stay in a small room behind the school's library while the association members who brought him to the village were put up in the classrooms. While making plans for Xu to leave Singapore, the group also mulled over the issue of Xu's collection of art tools, materials, sketches, ceramics, and paintings, which would make escape cumbersome. The group finally decided to seal the collection in a few ceramic vats used for preserving century eggs and buried the vats in a disused well behind an abandoned attap hut near Chong Boon Chinese School. In early January 1942, Xu finally boarded a steamer bound for India, returning to Kunming, China via a circuitous route. By then, the Japanese had arrived in central Malaya.

Besides hiding his works and materials at Lelong Pah, Xu had another cache stashed near Jalan Belang along Upper Thomson Road. One of Xu's patrons, Han Tai Toon, a Hainanese businessman and planter, had

purchased a plot there to build a garden, where he had planted different varieties of rambutan and other tropical fruit. Calling it “Yu Qu Yuan” (“Garden of Foolish Indulgences” in Mandarin), Han used the land as an exhibition space for his extensive collection of Chinese ceramics and books. Xu entrusted part of his collection of paintings and ceramics to Han as well, with instructions on how to pack and store them.

After the occupation, Zhong retrieved the vats from the well and air-dried the collection over two months in Chong Boon Chinese School. These items, as well as the cache at Han’s, were later returned to Xu Beihong. Xu then gifted the painting “Yu Gong Yi Shan” (“The Foolish Old Man Removes a Mountain” in Mandarin), which was in the stash hidden with Han, to Zhong in gratitude. This painting later appeared in the Chinese art market in

the 1980s and today resides in Xu Beihong Memorial Museum in China.



Painting by Xu Beihong titled “A Pair of Horses”, 1940
From the Xian Xue Zhuang Collection in memory of Dr Tan Tze Chor



Location of Chong Boon Chinese School, labelled as “Chinese School” on the map, near present-day Chuan Lane Park, 1938
Survey Department collection courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

LIFE IN RURAL ANG MO KIO

In the days after the war ended, villagers of Ang Mo Kio eased back into their farming life. The area went largely undeveloped, with no infrastructural development such as water or electrical supply. Rubber companies resumed the cultivation and harvesting of rubber and villagers mainly worked in the plantations in the morning and tended to their farms in the afternoon. According to Douglas Hiorns (b. 1925), who arrived in Singapore in 1948 to assume the post of general manager at Bukit Sembawang Estates Ltd, the farmers were Hokkien and Teochew Chinese. On top of growing all kinds of leafy and root vegetables, they would also breed chickens, ducks and pigs.

FARMING DAYS

Keeping vegetable farms and fruit orchards was common in Ang Mo Kio. Farmers would bring their produce to sell at Tekka market along Serangoon Road or at the open-air market along Upper Thomson Road. Many also reared chickens and ducks. There was even a crocodile farm at the junction of present-day Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1 and Lorong Chuan. Lam Chun See (b. 1952), who grew up in Kow Tiow Kio, recalled there was a year when a crocodile escaped during flooding and villagers had to look out for the creature.

Fish rearing was revived after the war and continued well into the 1960s. Chua Ah Kuan (b. 1911), who kept mainly bighead carp, grass carp, and silver carp, shared that in those days, farmers like him did not have much capital. Instead of paying for fish fry, which were supplied by Cantonese businessmen in Potong Pasir, Chua and others like him would barter trade water hyacinth grown in their ponds for the fry instead.

Chua explained that it took about seven to eight months to rear the fish until they were fit for harvest. These different types of fish were bred together as grass carp fed on grass feed while bighead carp fed on the waste of grass carp. When it was time for harvest, middlemen, usually the fish fry shop owners from Potong Pasir, would come at around 3 am in the morning to harvest the fish from the ponds. They would transport the fish to the town and auction them in Ellenborough Market at Clarke Quay. The farmers would then clean out their ponds and prepare for the next round of breeding.

In the 1960s, the Singapore government increased its efforts to boost farm production. This led to a rise in pig farming in rural areas, including Ang Mo Kio. Many farmers in the area switched from fish farming to pig farming, as the latter was more profitable. The existing fish ponds were mainly used to grow water hyacinth, which was used as feed for pigs. Other fish farms transformed into recreational fishing spots as well. Like many of his peers, Chua switched to pig farming. Starting with three pigs, Chua eventually grew his brood to 300 pigs.



Typical fish pond meant for breeding fish, 1960s
Primary Production Department Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Aerial photograph showing the vegetable farms and fish ponds along Kow Tiow Kio, 1946

Aerial photographs by the British Royal Air Force between 1940 to 1970s, from a collection held by the National Archives of Singapore. Crown copyright.

To supplement the pigs' diet of water hyacinth, Ang Mo Kio's farmers would collect food waste. Chua would cycle to Clyde Terrace Market at Beach Road to collect fish waste and discarded vegetables, often lugging some 50 kilograms of feed back home. Ng Jim Ming (b. 1959) grew up near the first bridge of Kow Tiow Kio near present-day Lorong Chuan, and his family kept pigs as well. Ng remembered, "I would go to the new housing estates in Toa Payoh. There, people would leave out their leftover food outside their doors and I would collect them for pig feed. When it was Chinese New Year, we would then return to these homes and give them chicken eggs in return."

As a child, Lam Chun See recalled the occasion when the female pigs came into heat. A farmer would bring around a big boar to inseminate them. The service, known as *kan te ko* ("leading the pig brother" in Hokkien), cost \$3 per sow and young unmarried girls were not allowed to watch the proceedings due to the belief that they should be protected from viewing unsightly acts.

Ang Mo Kio was also known for its flower gardens and nurseries. In the area around present-day Serangoon Garden alone, there



Pig farming at Ang Mo Kio Village, located along Thomson Road, 1962.

Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

were said to be around 20 such businesses producing cut flowers for sale. Lim Hung Chang (b. 1949) was born at Cheng San. His two uncles ran gardens growing orchids and flowers, such as chrysanthemum, while Lim's own family grew red and white lotus in two

ponds. Lim recalled that his grandmother would cut the lotus and bring cut flowers to sell at a roadside stall at Lim Tua Tow market along Upper Serangoon Road.

As for Ng Jim Ming, his father, Ng Tze Hua, had immigrated to Singapore from Puning, Chaozhou, before the war and had learnt the nursery trade from other Teochew kinsmen. He started planting *wan nian qing* (*dieffenbachia* sp., commonly known as dumb cane) for sale, before expanding to growing flowers such as dahlia, gardenia, frangipani and *magnolia champaca*. The elder Ng would harvest the flowers daily and cycle down to Tekka market to sell them. His children would eagerly await his return as he would usually bring back treats such as preserved vegetables typical in Teochew diet.

Ng Jim Ming shared, “My father was very strict about work and would demand that we only use burnt soil for propagating plants. To prepare the burnt soil, we would have to create a pit using rubber tyres. My siblings and I would take shifts through the night to burn the soil. The soil would burn till it turned white and would be safe for growing new cuttings. Each time, we would produce around two to three trucks full of burnt soil. Work was hard; we had to work round the year and the only day for rest was the first day of Chinese New Year.”

Like all farming work, the nursery trade was also subject to the mercy of weather. Ng recounted that in one year, severe flooding destroyed all of the family’s *wan nian qing*, which were all grown in flower beds. Thereafter, the family switched to propagating their plants in pots and on racks to prevent such extensive losses again.

KAMPONG REALITIES

Ang Mo Kio was one of the last rural districts in Singapore to see large-scale infrastructural development. For most villagers, kampong life was a mix of idyllic childhood memories, hard farm work and the realities of rural living. Douglas Hiorns described Ang Mo Kio before housing development took off in the 1970s:



Ng Jim Ming’s mother, Teo Bak Khim, at the nursery’s shopfront along Lorong Kinchir at Kow Tiow Kio, c. 1970s
Courtesy of Ban Nee Chen Nursery



Ng Tze Hua and his children at their nursery along Lorong Kinchir, 1970s
Courtesy of Ban Nee Chen Nursery

“... when I first came, there were no telephones or anything like that inside and most of the children were born at home. The babies—the mothers gave birth to the children at home. There would be the Malay bidan or the Chinese midwife who would help. Quite often the child would be born with just the aid of the female relatives, the aunties, and grandmothers and so on...But when there was a difficult birth, those people really suffered. Because there was no telephone. Then the tracks were few and far between and very rudimentary. No ambulance could get in, so there would be a high incidence ... a much higher incidence of death due to childbirth in those days.”

He further added:

“Not many people worked away from the area simply because if you lived in the centre of Ang Mo Kio, it would take you a good half an hour by bicycle and walking or even more than just to get on to the main road. Then from the main road, the bus service was not all that good. You had multiplicity of bus companies, all different companies until they were eventually amalgamated. And their buses are rather slow and they never went anywhere... So travel was not so easy.”

There were only a few main roads on the periphery of the district—Yio Chu Kang Road, Upper Serangoon Road, Thomson Road, and Braddell Road. Within Ang Mo Kio, the villages were mainly connected by dirt tracks, and a couple of roads such as Sembawang Hills Drive and Lorong Kinchir (as Chwee Arm Lor was named after the war). Many of the residences in Ang Mo Kio were so inaccessible that during election periods, Ronnie Lim Ah Bee (b. 1945) shared that political parties would drop campaign flyers on the kampongs using small airplanes.

Healthcare facilities were non-existent within the Ang Mo Kio district. The nearest facilities were a few government clinics, with one at Yio Chu Kang Road, one at Upper Serangoon Road and another at Upper Thomson Road, a private clinic at Serangoon Garden, a private hospital in Upper Serangoon, and Kandang Kerbau Hospital in Serangoon. For serious medical issues, one would have to visit Singapore General Hospital at Outram.

Getting to the nearest clinic in the case of an emergency was a challenge, as villagers usually had to go on foot or cycle. Ng Jim Ming, who grew up in a family of nine children, recalled that his mother gave birth to her first four children at home. Once, his second brother had a heat stroke and his father carried him on the back to the nearest clinic to seek help.

Given the inaccessibility to modern medical care and general poverty, it was far more common for villagers to self-medicate or

consult local traditional medicine men. Ronnie Lim, who grew up in Cheng San, remembered that it was common for villagers to apply plasters with opium to wounds and boils. Even dental procedures were often carried out by locals claiming dental expertise and Lim remembered a villager who died after a botched molar extraction. “Nobody really wanted to go to the hospital,” Lim said. “Because going there was usually the last resort, those who went seldom make it back home.”

Seeking divine help was common during this time as a form of treatment for ailments. Neo Lean Teck (b. 1942), a former villager from Cheok Sua, near present-day Mayflower estate and Ang Mo Kio Town Garden West, shared that the village’s temple, Leng San Giam, worshipped the deity Fa Chu Gong who was known for his healing powers. When the sick came to the temple for advice, a medium channelling the deity would lead them to villagers who had the herbs or medication in their homes and demand the herbs from them. At present-day Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1, the temple Gao Lin Gong was also popular for divination on medical issues. According to the villagers, the divination was carried out via a spirit sedan chair carried by two bearers. Once the chair started rocking, it was the sign that the deity had arrived. Communication between the worshippers and the deity was carried out via a stick prop extended from the chair, which would “write” instructions in a large tray of sand or bran. For the sick, prescriptions would be written for traditional herbal remedies. In some cases, the chair was known to have directed the bearers to the forest to forage for the right medicinal herbs.

Flooding was also a regular occurrence in Ang Mo Kio. Neo recalled that whenever it rained, Cheok Sua would turn very muddy and red from the red rock in the area. Drowned pigs would be found in the river. In 1973, villagers of Cheok Sua complained that the road running through the village would flood and turn into a big drain whenever it rained. Pig waste would then flood the village and enter their homes.



Pond in Kow Tiow Kio, 1964
Courtesy of Lam Chun See

Sim Chin Sen (b. 1938) who grew up at Kow Tiow Kio in the present-day Sin Ming Road area shared that his home was near one of the nine bridges. It was a favourite spot for him as there were plenty of shrimps and fish to catch. However, whenever it rained, the waters would swell and the current would become strong. As such, his father and older brother would reprimand every time they caught him playing there for fear of him drowning.

The dangers of drowning in Ang Mo Kio's many tributaries, ponds, and the Kallang River were very real for villagers. Ng Jim Ming shared, "The elders would tell children to keep away from ponds because of water ghosts. Looking back, I think it was their way to keep children safe. The water hyacinths were tightly packed on the surface of the ponds, and if you fell in, it would be hard to get out."

IDYLIC MEMORIES

Despite harsh realities that were typical of kampong life, for many former villagers, the countryside environment, simplicity of life, and warm friendships among fellow kampong dwellers were the most memorable parts of living in the kampong.

Marcus Toh (b. 1967) described his fondest memories of Lao Pah, "There were little waterfalls where my grandfather would take a bath every evening. Our outdoor shower took water from the streams. We would sleep by sunset as it would get very dark at night and



Marcus Toh, together with his cousins and neighbours, in front of his childhood home in Lao Pah, undated
Courtesy of Marcus Toh (Ah Tian)

there was nothing else to do. In the morning, the air was fresh, and very cool. Sometimes, I would put a foot out from the blanket, feel the cold air, and quickly snuck back into my bed."

Ronnie Lim, too, recalled with fondness his kampong house, "My kampong hut was just next to a rambutan tree. I could put my hand out of the window and pluck rambutans. At night, I could see flying foxes and bats coming to feed. We had plenty of fruit trees then. As a child coming back from school, I would be climbing the trees like a monkey, picking guava, jambu, soursop etc. Sometimes, I would find fruit half-eaten by birds, and I would just take a knife and cut out that part and eat the other half."

Ang Mo Kio's forests, plantations, and streams were the playgrounds for the kampong children. Chua Soo Kim (b. 1958) grew up at Jalan Hwi Yoh on the far eastern side of Ang Mo Kio and would head to the area around present-day Ang Mo Kio Street 54, which used to be a swamp. There, he could catch fish such as silver carp, and birds. For Ng Jim Ming, one of the greatest pleasures in childhood was the simple act of enjoying a pack of peanuts and bottle of cola in the shade of rubber trees.

Lam Chun See recalled his favourite childhood pastimes, "In our kampong, there were many fish ponds ... These ponds provided many hours of free entertainment for kampong boys like me and my brothers and cousins ...



Kampong house at Ronnie Lim's childhood village in Cheng San, undated
Courtesy of Ronnie Lim



Lam Chun See, who is carried by his mother, outside his childhood home at Kow Tiow Kio, 1958
Courtesy of Lam Chun See



Resident at her house in Cheng San, undated
Courtesy of Ronnie Lim



Pond near Lam Chun See's childhood home, 1964
Courtesy of Lam Chun See

Ours were crude rods made from bamboo branches. We simply tied the nylon string with a fish hook to one end and that was it... For bait, we used earthworms that we dug with a changkol [a type of hoe]. We usually fished at our neighbour's pond where there were many cheap fishes like tilapias and perch."

Villagers also looked forward to itinerant hawkers making their rounds in the kampongs. Lam remembered an assortment of hawkers who could come at different times of the day, peddling anything from bread and ice cream to confectionaries, *yong tau hoo*, and *putu mayam*. Another interesting source of entertainment was the *koyok man* ("medicine man" in Hokkien), who would travel around with an assistant to sell traditional medicated oils and plasters. In Kow Tiow Kio, he would set up right in front of the coffee shop opposite Lam's house. Lam shared:

"These itinerant medicine men were often martial art exponents and they used their internal strength and pugilistic skills to demonstrate amazing feats like bending spears pressed against their throat, swallowing fire, breaking bricks with their bare hands and weapons display. I recall one chap who swallowed a huge brass ball and then regurgitated it with much drama. Some were also jugglers who used pins, hoops, balls, and fire torches in their acts. Others could even perform magic tricks like turning incense paper into real money or salted fish into live fishes. These performances were usually scheduled somewhere in between all the sales talk. First the assistant would hit a gong loudly to draw a crowd in. Once they had attracted a sizeable crowd, the koyok man would begin to proclaim the amazing potency of his products. The products included medicated plaster, ointment, oils and pills of all sorts. Besides treating aches, pains, and bruises, they could also treat snake bites."

Events such as weddings and festivals were highlights of kampong life. Cheng San's two temples organised three festival days every year. One temple would hold two feast days, with Hokkien opera on one day and Teochew opera on the other. The other temple would commission Teochew opera on its feast day. Villagers from Cheng San and surrounding kampongs would turn up for the opera, bringing their own stools for the performances. Lim Hung Chang's aunt stayed near one of the temples and would claim the best spots for watching the performances four or five days in advance for the family.

For Marcus Toh, the main attraction of such temple festivals were the fairs that set up on the grounds. As a child, he would walk through the rubber plantations with his family at night to get to temple festivals in other villages, armed with torchlights and stools. While the opera performances were the main draw for the grown-ups, Toh took delight in the treats such as ice balls and bird's nest drinks peddled at the fair.

Weddings were significant events, and one of the rare occasions when pigs were slaughtered as offerings and for the feast. Toh's uncles held their wedding feasts in the front of their kampong house. One banquet was held in the day for neighbours and friends, and another at night for relatives.

See Chye Huat (b. 1953) held his wedding in Cheng San and remembered that the neighbours helped with the organising and preparations. For See, the banquet in the day was for women and children, while the banquet at night was for men. Chefs were hired to cook on site and there were around 20 tables set up. A pig's head, duck, chicken, fish and crab were given as offerings for prayers and distributed during the wedding as well.

Life as such continued well into the 1970s, when the government announced in 1973 its intentions to build a new self-sufficient housing town in Ang Mo Kio.



Afternoon reception during a wedding in Kow Tiow Kio, 1972
Courtesy of Lam Chun See

EDUCATION DESPITE POVERTY

Like many parts of rural Singapore, poverty was very much part of life in Ang Mo Kio. See Chye Huat remembered that his mother would cook a big pot of food every day for her nine children, and the older children would have to help their father in construction sites and odd jobs on weekends to make ends meet. Sim Chin Sen, on the other hand, had to pluck rambutans to trade for other food as a child. His mother passed away when he was five, and Sim thus left to work as a rubber tapper in Kulai, Johor, at the age of seven years old, returning only when he turned 15.

For Marcus Toh, his grandmother single-handedly brought up eight children after her husband was killed in a car accident when he cycled out of Lao Pah to sell vegetables. Toh's mother, as the eldest child, shouldered much of the responsibilities at home and had to help with farming from a young age.

Despite the general poverty, Ang Mo Kio's communities understood the importance of education and sought to provide that for their young. The pre-war Chong Boon Chinese School, supported by the Singapore Ann Kway Association, was one such example. After the

war, there were a few other village schools established in Ang Mo Kio.

Shin Min Public School, located in present-day Bishan, was jointly founded by villagers of Kow Tiow Kio and three other villages at Thomson Road namely Hainan Sua, Ang Moh Dan Kek, and Orh Kio. Chong Lip School was founded in Cheok Sua in 1947 with the support of Singapore Ann Kway Association and another school, Fook Hing Chinese School, was established in Sin Pah.

In Cheng San, Chin San School (present-day Jing Shan Primary School) was set up as a Chinese-medium school in 1945. Founded by local Chinese businessmen with the support of the villagers, the school catered mainly to the children living in Cheng San, many of whom had to walk for more than half an hour daily to reach the school.

Other than these schools, political parties such as Barisan Socialis also ran kindergarten classes in the villages, often using the opera stages of temples as classrooms. Oh Beng Hua (b. 1964), who grew up at Kow Tiow Kio, remembers, "The opera stage of Gao Lin Gong was used to hold kindergarten classes. I

remember that we would run up and down the stairs of the opera stage and once I fell and hit my chin. I still have the scar!"

These schools, which taught mainly in Hokkien and Chinese, were housed in basic facilities, usually wooden and zinc structures, and little is documented of their history. However, they played an important role in a time when public schools were a rarity and gave children then an opportunity to gain literacy and knowledge. A former student of Fook Hing Chinese School, Chen Lai Shui, wrote of his alma mater:

"In the past, it [Fook Hing Chinese School] was a typical Chinese village school. The school facilities were basic, organising the school was arduous, and it struggled to continue. But it was kept going thanks to village elders who were passionate about Chinese education, and those who had funds contributed, and those who could serve with their labour did so, so that the poor young villagers like us could have a chance to be educated. I remember, in those days, my family was poor, and so, not only did I not have to pay school fees, but because I could not afford school text books, the school helped by lending me books so that I could continue my studies. For the kindness of my school in the past, I am particularly grateful."



Kindergarten children at Gao Lin Gong, undated
Courtesy of Oh Beng Hua

RISE OF PRIVATE HOUSING ESTATES

Housing shortage, already a growing concern in Singapore before the war, escalated in the post-war years. In 1947, the government estimated that one-third of the population needed housing. The shortage led to the rise of private housing estates around the island before mass public housing picked up speed in the late 1960s and 1970s. In Ang Mo Kio alone, four such housing estates were built.

Sembawang Hills Estate

Many of the rubber estates in Ang Mo Kio were owned by two key companies: Singapore United Rubber Estates and Bukit Sembawang Rubber Company. With rubber being a declining industry, the two companies decided to jointly build affordable houses on their plantations.

Douglas Hiorns, Managing Director of Bukit Sembawang Rubber, shared, "... in the mid-50s ... the company started to make plans for large-scale housing estates. The reason was that we still had a lot of land that had been cut down, the rubber that were cut down during the war at the behest of the Japanese forces. But in the mid-50s, we [Bukit Sembawang

Estates Ltd] produced our own masterplan which was that certain areas would not be replanted with rubber and if they were more suitable for housing then, we would attempt to build housing estates there."

The first such joint venture was the present-day Sembawang Hills Estate, which targeted workers making below \$500 a month. By 1956, the companies had completed 307 houses. A long waiting list ensued as people from all walks of life applied, from servicemen and clerks to teachers and labourers. In all, some 1,000 houses, sold between \$10,000 to \$20,000 each, were built. The success of Sembawang Hills led the rubber companies to build more housing estates on former rubber land, including Bukit Mugliston and Jalan Kayu.

Mayflower Gardens

Mayflower Gardens was developed by Singapore Government Officers' Co-operative Housing Society, a society which was established in 1948 by the government to address the housing shortage experienced by government workers. Members paid subscriptions and houses developed were allocated by ballot. The government then approved the loans to officers who successfully balloted for the houses.

The co-operative started with small housing projects at Cambridge and Pulasan Roads and went on to build larger estates such as Windsor Park at Upper Thomson Road. In 1966, it embarked on Mayflower Gardens, which comprised 201 houses and six shops.

Teachers' Housing Estate

The idea of a housing estate built for teachers was born in the 1960s, when a group of officers at Singapore Teachers' Union brainstormed on ways to finance a teachers' clubhouse with outdoor facilities. The union did not have funds for a site located in central Singapore and a remote location might mean that patrons would be few. The group then decided to work with a developer to build a housing estate for teachers in a suburban location, which would



Aerial photograph of Sembawang Hills Estate, with the land surrounding the estate being mainly forests and farms, 1960
Aerial photographs by the British Royal Air Force between 1940 to 1970s, from a collection held by the National Archives of Singapore. Crown copyright.

bring in income for the union and ensure regular patronage for the clubhouse located in the estate.

The union scouted for a suitable site and finally decided on a piece of land at the junction of Yio Chu Kang and Upper Thomson Roads. In those days, the surrounding area was mainly farmland and there were only dirt tracks leading from the road. Despite that, the union pressed on and the project received a boost when the government announced that it would approve loans for teachers who applied for houses in the estate. Over the course of 18 months, 256 houses were built before the



Signboard advertising the Teachers' Housing Estate at the construction site, 1968

Image reproduced from Yeoh Beng Cheow, "Report on the Teachers' Housing Estate," *Teachers' Forum* no. 1 (April– May 1968) (Singapore: Singapore Teachers' Union, 1968), 12. (From National Library, Singapore, call no. RCLOS 331.88113711 TF).



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Dr Goh Keng Swee unveiling a plaque at the official opening of Teachers' Centre, 1975
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

applicants, most of whom were teachers, moved into the estate in 1969.

The roads in the estate were named after famous poets and writers from various cultures, such as Tu Fu, a Tang period Chinese poet, Rabindranath Tagore, a Bengali polymath, and Munshi Abdullah, a Malayan writer who chronicled the founding days of Singapore. In the early years, residents had to buy groceries from a mobile market operating from a van or drive to the nearest market in Nee Soon (present-day Yishun). Shops were only set up in the estate in the 1970s.

As for the clubhouse, it eventually took the form of Teachers' Centre, a place to meet the professional development and recreational needs of the nation's teachers. Building commenced in 1973 and the centre was officially opened by then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Dr Goh Keng Swee in November 1975. The centre came equipped with seminar rooms, a hall, a library and even a swimming pool. It served its mission into the 2000s.

Seletar Hills

Seletar Hills is another estate that was built on a former rubber estate. It was developed by Singapore United Estates Ltd at Yio Chu Kang Road. The company was a subsidiary of Singapore United Rubber Plantations Ltd, a sister company of Bukit Sembawang Rubber Company.

Work on the estate began in the late 1950s, with some 200 houses and shops completed in the first phase. The experience with building Sembawang Hills led the company to realise there was a demand for bigger and more luxurious houses. As such, the properties built in the later phases of Seletar Hills had up to five times the built-in area of houses in Sembawang Hills. By 1967, some 900 houses had been completed.

During the 1960s and 1970s, many of the residents were British and Australian servicemen and their families, especially those who were stationed at Seletar airbase.



View of Jalan Jarak at Seletar Hills, 1960s
 RAFSA Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Serangoon Garden

Originally called Serangoon Garden Estate, this housing estate was the brainchild of British developer Steven Charles Macey, who founded the Serangoon Garden Estate Company. Macey had bought 300 acres of land off 6¼ milestone Yio Chu Kang Road from Singapore United Rubber Plantations with the vision of building 2,200 homes catering for the lower income group of white-collared workers in Singapore.

The \$35 million housing project was then the biggest such private enterprise in Singapore. Besides houses, Macey had planned to build shops, a market, a cinema, clinics, schools, parks, and playing fields in the estate. Macey also worked closely with Sir George Pepler, eminent British town planner, the Rural Board, and Singapore Improvement Trust to develop the estate's plans. The homes were to be sold from \$13,500 to \$19,000 each.

Construction work commenced in 1952 but progress was hindered by squatter families living on the land. The company eventually had to pay compensation of \$120,000 to 120 families and work with the government to resettle the families. It was reported that these families, who were Chinese and totalling 2,000 people, had owned flower gardens,

vegetable plots, fish ponds, and poultry farms. There were said to be around 20 flower gardens producing cut flowers for sale.

By 1954, the company had completed 1,000 houses. The estate progressed rapidly within a few years, with more houses, churches, shops, a theatre, and a market established. Its network of over 40 roads and streets were named places in Britain, harking back to the background of the estate's founders and planners. Many of the residents were lower income workers, as well as British military servicemen and their families. The distinctive red zinc roofs of the houses soon gave rise to the local nickname Ang Sar Lee ("red zinc" in Hokkien).



Shops at Serangoon Garden, c. 1960s
 RAFSA Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

THE MAKING OF A NEW TOWN

In the 1970s, the government announced plans to develop Ang Mo Kio into a self-sufficient new town. Resettlement of the villagers began as the government started clearing land. By 1975, the first neighbourhood at Ang Mo Kio 1 was almost completed. The transformation of Ang Mo Kio from rural backwaters into Singapore's latest new town was complete by the early 1980s. It was the start of a new era for Ang Mo Kio.

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS OF ANG MO KIO NEW TOWN

Initially, the government had planned to redevelop Ang Mo Kio as a light industrial estate where motorcar repair and industrial workshops were located. By 1972, the plans for Ang Mo Kio had increased in scale to make the area a "centralised motor repair industry". These workshops were built south of Kallang River, present-day Sin Ming Road.

In 1973, Housing & Development Board (HDB) announced that Ang Mo Kio would be developed into a self-sufficient new town with office developments, supermarkets, and shops. By this time, HDB had already built six new towns, and the experience gained in each development gave them more resources and knowledge to refine the planning for the next. The agency's approach to developing Ang Mo Kio was marked with confidence and optimism as the new-generation town, as could be seen in a 1973 *Straits Times* report:

"Ang Mo Kio new town will have the best-designed HDB flats in Singapore, the Housing Board said yesterday. The town will have 45,000 flats on a 1,500-acre site, with plenty of open space and greenery, social, recreational, sporting, educational, shopping and transport amenities. The HDB calls it a "new generation" town designed for gracious living."



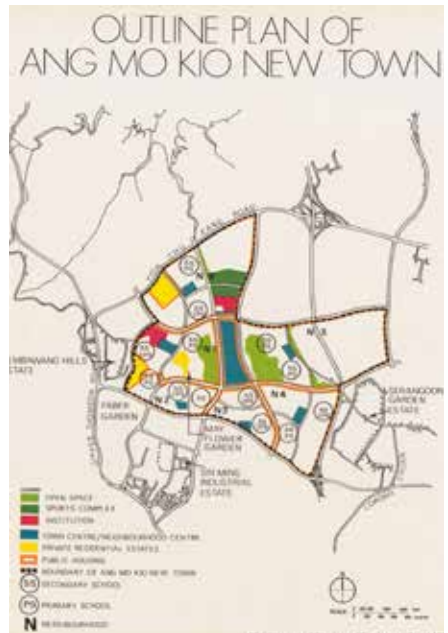
Motor workshops and housing development in the present-day Sin Ming Road area, with Kow Tiow Kio located across Kallang River in the background, 1972
Courtesy of Housing & Development Board

In the meantime, the government began resettling the Ang Mo Kio's villages in stages. One of the earliest sites to be cleared was Teck Ghee Village, where 250 residents, 35 farmers, and four shops were cleared from 200 acres of land in 1972. In 1976, HDB relocated another 184 farmers, 824 families, 15 shops, 37 industries, and five temples among others to make way for the town centre and another four neighbourhoods. Most of these families and shops were rehoused in Ang Mo Kio and Toa Payoh. Some of the farmers were given alternative farmland in Punggol.

For the development of the neighbourhood with blocks numbering 500s, over 350 families, 85 farmers, and five shops were resettled. By 1975, the first neighbourhood, the blocks numbering 200s located between Ang Mo Kio Avenues 1 and 3, was nearing completion. In 1976, 9,200 flats had been completed and the site for the town centre was cleared.

By early 1980s, all the villagers have been resettled. Chua Ah Kuan (b. 1911), who stayed in Sin Pah near present-day Ang Mo Kio Street 32, was resettled in 1981. He shared, "some [of the former farmers] went to look for work ... The government also issued licences for us to become shop keepers or hawkers ... Some

went to rent shop space, and those who did not have capital stopped farming and went to look for all kinds of work ... I didn't have capital, and my children had gone to work ... As for me, I was old already, nothing to do, *jiak pak si dui kia* ("walk around after eating" in Hokkien)."



Outline plan of Ang Mo Kio new town, 1973
 Courtesy of Housing & Development Board



First blocks of flats under construction in Ang Mo Kio, with greenery and kampong houses still surrounding the development, 1974
 Courtesy of Housing & Development Board

SETTING “FIRSTS”

Ang Mo Kio held several “firsts” in terms of housing planning and development. One of the largest new towns to be constructed by HDB then, Ang Mo Kio was the first to be entirely designed in metric dimensions.

Prior to that, building projects in Singapore were designed based on imperial units. Switching to metric involved not just converting site measurements and building plans to a different system, but also educating

building contractors and suppliers on the metric system and helping them recalculate material requirements and costings.

Ang Mo Kio was also the first town to feature “new-generation” flats, which were improved designs by HDB. The new flats had larger floor areas and corridors in slab blocks were wider compared to existing HDB blocks at the time. Another “first” was five-room flats in slab blocks. Up until then, five-room flats were only built in point blocks.

ICONS OF A DISTINCTIVE TOWN

In the 1970s, HDB was no longer under pressure to build as many flats as quickly as possible as housing shortage in Singapore eased. As such, the agency began exploring ways to make each new town distinctive. This included retaining part of the original topography and vegetation and commissioning iconic buildings.

The agency wrote in 1977:

“Further refinements were introduced in the design and planning of our estates. Greater emphasis was given to mould the physical characteristics of each estate.”

As such, Ang Mo Kio’s neighbourhoods and roads were planned around the natural contours of the precinct. Two natural hillocks were retained and turned into Ang Mo Kio East and West town gardens. Social and recreational amenities were built so that the town could be truly self-sufficient. When Ang Mo Kio Swimming Complex opened in 1982 and Ang Mo Kio Branch Library in 1985, residents no longer had to travel out of the new town to access such facilities. The \$4.7 million swimming complex with its distinctive tetrahedral skylights went on to win the Singapore Institute of Architects 1986 Architectural Design Award for its roof design.



The former Ang Mo Kio Swimming Complex with its iconic tetrahedral skylights, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

HDB’s efforts to create a distinctive and well-designed new town were recognised in 1983, when Ang Mo Kio received the outstanding design award by the Singapore Institute of Architects.

ANG MO KIO TOWN CENTRE

One of the largest town centres in its time, Ang Mo Kio Town Centre was built in an elongated valley flanked on the east and west by two hillocks. The centre, completed in the late 1970s, was planned to have sufficient facilities including a polyclinic and library to serve over 245,000 residents.



Aerial view of Ang Mo Kio Town Centre, with the fountain in the centre and Oriental Emporium on the right, 1981
 Courtesy of Housing & Development Board

For the first generation of HDB residents in Ang Mo Kio, the town centre of the 1970s and 1980s, with its iconic water fountain at the centre, held much nostalgia. Oriental Emporium opened in 1979 with an in-house up-market Chinese restaurant of the same name on the second floor. Residents recalled with fondness shopping at the emporium for special days such as Chinese New Year, and many held their weddings or birthday celebrations at the Oriental Restaurant.

By the early 1980s, the town centre was home to a slew of cinemas offering a wide choice of films from Hong Kong cinema to Hollywood—Broadway Theatre, Ang Mo Kio Cinema, Jubilee, and New Crown/ New Town Cinemas. Sulaiman Musa (b. 1950) who moved to Ang Mo Kio in the 1970s, recalled, “people from Toa Payoh, Bishan, and Thomson would come to Ang Mo Kio to shop at Emporium.”

Another long-time resident, Karen Albuquerque, who moved to Ang Mo Kio Avenue 3 with her family in 1978, shared, “We were very familiar with Oriental and the restaurant upstairs. It was a place where people held their wedding dinners and birthday celebrations. When the festive season drew



Oriental Emporium, 1979
 Courtesy of Housing & Development Board

near, we would buy new clothes and festive goods at the town centre. I would also catch movies at Jubilee and Broadway now and then. The neighbourly relations were very strong and close. During festivals, we would visit each other and kept a look out for one another. My mother even left a set of our keys with one of my neighbours!”



New Town and New Crown Cinemas, 1984
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

The new bustling town centre also drew its share of entrepreneurs who set up shop. Elsie Lim, who established Elsie Department Store in 1980, saw the opportunities in the new town. Initially focused on designing and making boutique clothes, Lim's business has since established itself as a craft supplies hub. Oh Tian Teck (b. 1946) is another such entrepreneur. Oh, who had a business selling

household items in Toa Payoh, visited Ang Mo Kio for the first time in 1980 and took a strong liking to the new town. He thus set up Hwa Aik General Store, which has since become a household name in Ang Mo Kio. Oh shares, "My shop opened on 20 December 1980. Back then, Ang Mo Kio was a new town, and business was brisk, with lots of shoppers. We would start work at 10am, and all the way till 10pm, when we close shop, there would still be many customers."

By the late 1980s and 1990s, Ang Mo Kio had become a regular stop for VIPs visiting Singapore. Overseas dignitaries were regularly brought to the new town, which had become a showcase of HDB's achievements. Block 710 at Ang Mo Kio Avenue 8 became known as the "VIP Block", where dignitaries including Queen Elizabeth, Soviet Union Premier Nikolai Ryzhkov, and Chinese Premier Li Peng were brought to experience life in a HDB flat.



Oh Tian Teck at his shop Hwa Aik General Store, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board



Queen Elizabeth II at the viewing gallery of Block 710, 1989
Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Ang Mo Kio Town Centre, 1981
Courtesy of Housing & Development Board

BLOCK 259, THE “CLOVER BLOCK”

259 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 2

As part of HDB’s drive to create distinctive identities for all its new towns, the agency commissioned seven distinctive public housing blocks. Block 259 at Ang Mo Kio Avenue 2 was the first and only block in Singapore to have circular flats. Completed in 1981, the block comprised 96 five-room flats with four units per floor. Features of the block included the use of solid bricks rather than conventional hollow bricks, and the north-south orientation of all the bedrooms to ensure they stayed cool through the day.

When the block was launched, reception was mixed. Some felt that the construction costs, which were around 20-25% more compared to standard HDB blocks, were too high, while others criticised the impracticality of the circular design, which made furnishing the flats challenging. Owners spent more to renovate and furnish their circular flats, as furniture had to be custom built. Hired interior designers and furniture manufacturers charged more to fit their designs along curved walls.

Dubbed the “Clover Block” after its resemblance to the plant, Block 259 has since evolved to become a beloved icon of Ang Mo Kio and its units are still highly sought after today.



Block 259 when it was under construction, 1981
Courtesy of Phillip Ho



Block 259, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board



Curved interior of a flat in Block 259, undated
Courtesy of Phillip Ho

GARDENS AND PARKS OF ANG MO KIO

Flanking Ang Mo Kio Town Centre, there are two town gardens built on hillocks and featured original vegetation from former kampongs and plantations.

Completed in 1981, the six-hectare Ang Mo Kio Town Garden East was the town's first such garden. Designed and landscaped by HDB, the garden used to be part of Cheng Sua Lai, also known as Cheng San. Much of the original vegetation, terrain, and even pathways were retained as part of the park. Rubber seed sculptures also dot the walk paths, harking back to the area's local history.

Ang Mo Kio Town Garden West, completed in 1983 at a cost of \$2.7 million, was the largest town garden project by HDB then. The 22-hectare park used to be part of the area known as Sin Pah. The agency engaged a Japanese contractor, Obayashi Gumi, to design the park, the first time a landscaping contract was awarded to a foreign firm on a package-deal basis. Built on a natural hillock, the park stood out for design features such as an observatory terrace, original vegetation, playgrounds for children, and ponds.



Aerial view of Ang Mo Kio Town Garden East with Ang Mo Kio Town Centre and Masjid Al-Muttaqin in the background, 1982

Courtesy of Housing & Development Board



Rubber seed sculptures in the town garden, 2023

Courtesy of National Heritage Board



Ang Mo Kio Town Garden West, 2023

Courtesy of National Heritage Board



Playground at Bishan Park, 1988

Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

When work on the 42-hectare park kicked off in 1986, it was reported that Bishan Park, as it was known then, was HDB's "most ambitious project to date". The \$8.5 million park was built around the tributary streams of Kallang River and acted as a green buffer between Ang Mo Kio and Bishan new towns. Designed by HDB, the park incorporated existing natural forests, and had a range of exercise and recreational facilities such as jogging tracks, landscaped gardens, fitness corners, playgrounds, and a multi-purpose court.

ANG MO KIO TOWN COUNCIL

342 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1

A familiar institution today, the concept of town council was piloted in Ang Mo Kio in 1986. This idea of a local council made up of residents to manage the maintenance of their estates was raised by Lim Boon Heng, then Member of Parliament for Kebun Baru, in



Ang Mo Kio Town Council, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

1984. By transferring duties from HDB to such councils, residents could have more autonomy over how their estates were managed and nurture a stronger sense of ownership and identity.

Ang Mo Kio was seen then as an ideal testing ground given that the town was new and therefore would have fewer maintenance issues. In addition, it had a strong grassroots network with active residents. Thus, three town councils, Ang Mo Kio West, Ang Mo Kio East, and Ang Mo Kio South, were established to be part of the pilot.

As anticipated, upon the launch of the pilot program, residents proposed ideas to improve their estates and improvements such as installation of ceiling fans at a hawker centre and maps to show locations of blocks and bus routes in the town. The pilot was considered successful, and the Town Council Act was passed in 1988.

ANG MO KIO COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

342 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1

The establishment of community hospitals to provide care for patients who did not require acute care was first tabled in 1982 as part of Singapore's health plans. Such hospitals would be managed jointly by representatives from community organisations, government, and private practitioners as part of the government's drive to encourage charitable and community organisations to play a bigger role in caring for aged and chronically sick residents. They would also help alleviate overcrowding at existing hospitals.

In 1986, it was announced that Singapore's first community hospital would be built in Ang Mo Kio. Construction on the hospital began in 1990 and Ang Mo Kio Community Hospital was officially opened on 17 December 1993 by Minister for Health Yeo Cheow Tong. During his opening speech, the minister highlighted, "The Ang Mo Kio Community Hospital will provide the needed intermediate level of hospital care in a community setting ... The

hospital is serving as an important link between acute hospital care, nursing homes and community-based health services provided by GPs [general practitioners] and voluntary welfare organisations such as the Home Nursing Foundation. It can help to integrate care for patients, especially elderly patients who need more nursing and rehabilitative care, thus enabling speedy return to their own homes. Community hospitals therefore fill an important niche in the range of services needed by the elderly in Singapore."

In keeping with the original intention of involving charities and community organisations in Singapore's healthcare services, the management of the Ang Mo Kio Hospital was transferred to two voluntary welfare organisations in 2002, Thye Hua Kwan and Chee Hoon Kog Moral Promotion Society. In addition, the two organisations Hindu Endowments Board and Jamiyah were invited to come on board as shareholders.

DRAGON PLAYGROUND AT ANG MO KIO AVENUE 3

In the mid-1970s, HDB wanted to create estates with more distinctive identities. Part of the strategy included implementing creative designs for playgrounds. In 1975, HDB announced that it would be featuring colourful, large-scale animal designs in their upcoming playgrounds. This vision was realised by 1979, when HDB unveiled designs for five "Adventureland" playgrounds in Bedok, Clementi, and Ang Mo Kio, costing around \$20,000 each. These playgrounds were created to provide ample opportunities for climbing, swinging, and playing. At Ang Mo Kio, the design was that of a dragon playground where children would tunnel down or swing from.

Khor Ean Ghee, who worked as a designer at HDB then, also designed other playgrounds



Dragon playground in Ang Mo Kio, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

such as the pelican playground at Dover Road and was involved in designing Ang Mo Kio Town Garden East. Today, the dragon playground at Ang Mo Kio is one of four such creations left in Singapore.

SCHOOLS OF ANG MO KIO NEW TOWN

With the development of Ang Mo Kio new town which included the establishment of several government schools, the area's former village schools saw a decline in their student population. Fook Hing Chinese School and Shin Min Public School closed by the 1980s while Chong Lip School, Chin San School, and Chong Boon Chinese School were re-established as government schools, and renamed Chong Li Primary School, Jing Shan Primary School, and Chong Boon Primary School respectively.

In the meantime, new government schools such as Ang Mo Kio Primary and Secondary Schools, Nanyang Polytechnic, and Anderson Junior College were set up to provide education for Ang Mo Kio's youth. Schools with a long lineage made their homes in Ang Mo Kio as well. CHIJ St Nicholas Girls' School, established in 1933 as a Chinese-medium

school at Victoria Street, moved to Ang Mo Kio in 1985. Da Qiao Primary School, founded at North Bridge Road in 1936 as Tai Keou School by the Hakka community, relocated here in 1982 after it was restructured as a government school in 1981. Presbyterian High School, started in 1965 as Li Sun High, established its campus in Ang Mo Kio in 1983.

Over time, Ang Mo Kio's schools underwent various mergers to better meet the evolving educational needs of Singapore's youth. Chong Boon and Da Qiao Primary Schools merged in 2000, which later merged again with Jing Shan Primary School in 2018. Chong Li Primary School merged with Teck Ghee Primary School in 2002.

The new town is also home to two key educational institutions providing for special needs children. Chao Yang School, founded in 1982 to provide education for children with mild intellectual disabilities, moved to Ang Mo Kio in 2006. Pathlight School, the first autism-focused school in Singapore, began operations in 2003 in the former premises of Chong Boon Primary School.

NEW COMMUNITIES, NEW STORIES

Within a decade, Ang Mo Kio had transformed from a sparsely populated area to becoming one of the largest new towns in Singapore. New communities formed as people from all walks of life, cultural backgrounds and faiths made Ang Mo Kio their home, each shaping Ang Mo Kio and creating new stories for a new town.

MASJID AL-MUTTAQIN

5140 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 6

An iconic building erected at one of the main entrances to Ang Mo Kio, Masjid Al-Muttaqin is the only mosque in Ang Mo Kio. Designed and built by Housing & Development Board (HDB) to cater to the needs of Muslims in Ang Mo Kio, the mosque was completed in 1980. The name “Al-Muttaqin” refers to pious people who are ever aware of God the Almighty.

Until then, the nearest mosques were located at Thomson Road, Kampong Sireh, or Pheng

Geck Avenue. Muslims in Ang Mo Kio would also attend religious sermons and gather at void decks for communal breaking of fast during Ramadan before Masjid Al-Muttaqin was ready. According to the mosque, most of the Malays living in Ang Mo Kio were resettled from areas including Buangkok, Tongkang Pecah (around Seletar East Farmway today) and Jalan Kayu.

Long-time worshipper Sulaiman Musa (b. 1950) recalled, “The Muslim committee organised gatherings in void decks to celebrate Hari Raya, usually on the night itself. They were encouraged to bring food along to be shared with others. The committee would also keep the Muslim residents informed immediately if any death happened in the neighbourhood.”

The idea of building a mosque in Ang Mo Kio was raised in the late 1970s. Following that, Muslims living in and around the precinct began fund-raising efforts.



Syed Ali Redha Alsagoff performing ground-breaking ceremony for Masjid Al-Muttaqin, 1979
Masjid Al-Muttaqin Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Masjid Al-Muttaqin, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Haji Mohd Rashid Shariff (b. 1941), who has been involved with the mosque since 1978, shared:

“To raise funds for the building of the mosque, we went door to door to ask for donations. We also called for donations at other mosques during Friday prayers. In the past, there used to be regular ‘expos’, much like funfairs with pasar malam (“night market” in Malay). We set up a stall there to sell mee rebus, mee siam, gado-gado—you name it, we have it! One such expo was held at Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1. During Hari Raya, we set up a stall at Bidadari Cemetery to offer air batu (“iced water” in Malay) to visitors, who would then donate some money for the drinks. This way, we gathered funds for the cause.”

In 1979, Syed Ali Redha Alsagoff, chairman of Lembaga Biasiswa Kenangan Maulud (“PMBM Scholarship Fund Board” in English) officiated the ground-breaking ceremony and the mosque was officially opened on 21 September 1980 by Haji Rahmat Kenap, Member of Parliament then for Geylang Serai.

CHURCH OF CHRIST THE KING

2221 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 8

Before Church of Christ the King was built, the nearest places of worship for Catholic

residents in Ang Mo Kio were at Upper Thomson Road and Serangoon Gardens. To cater for its congregation, the Archdiocese decided in the late 1970s to build a church in the new housing town.

The task of raising funds for the new church was given to Father Louis Fossion, a Belgian



Icon of the Mother of Perpetual Help, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board



Church of Christ the King, with the statue of Christ the King on the facade of the building, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

priest who had arrived in Singapore in 1968. Over three years, Father Fossion dedicated himself to the sourcing of funds for the church, collecting donations from various parishes and enlisting the help of religious communities such as the Carmelite Sisters, an order located at Bukit Teresa.

Officially opened on 26 September 1982, Church of Christ the King was built at a cost of \$3 million, out of which \$2 million was raised by donations from the Catholic community. As the population in Ang Mo Kio grew, the congregation at Church of Christ the King grew as well. By the 1990s, the church premises had become too small to accommodate the congregation. In 1996, the church underwent a rebuilding programme to construct a bigger church and a columbarium. The original building was demolished in 1999 to make way for the current building, which was completed in 2002.

On the facade of the building, a statue of Christ the King stands at the front balcony. The statue was sculpted in 1956 in Kerala, India and was originally located at Church of Our Lady Star of the Sea in Yishun. In 1989, the lease of Church of Our Lady Star of the Sea was close to expiring and fund-raising efforts were launched to build a new church in

Yishun. The Catholic community at Church of Christ the King donated a significant sum. In gratitude, the Church of Our Lady Star of the Sea presented them with this statue.

In the church's sanctuary, one may also see an icon of the Mother of Perpetual Help which dates back to the early 1950s. The icon was originally located in Novena Church and became badly tarnished over time. It was then stored until 1998 when it was given to a devotee, who later donated it to Church of Christ the King. The icon was then restored.

ANG MO KIO METHODIST CHURCH

1 Ang Mo Kio Street 21

In 1976, the Trinity Annual Conference (TRAC) of the Methodist Church decided to establish a Methodist congregation among the rapidly growing population of Ang Mo Kio. Following that, the church rented a house at Mayflower Rise to hold worship services, with the pastor living on the first floor. Evangelical work was carried out and in 1978, the Ang Mo Kio Methodist Church Local Conference was constituted with 49 members.

Soon after, however, HDB served a notice requesting the church to cease worship activities on residential premises. At the same time, two other Methodist Conferences,



Ang Mo Kio Methodist Church, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board



Birdsinging poles at the Kebun Baru Birdsinging Club, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

the Chinese Annual Conference (CAC) and the Emmanuel Tamil Annual Conference (ETAC), had also begun preaching among residents in Ang Mo Kio. The three Methodist Conferences, namely TRAC, CAC and ETAC, thus decided to build a church together and successfully secured the current site in 1979.

The church building was completed in 1981. As the congregation grew, more space was required and a series of expansions during the 1990s were carried out. In 2010, a major renovation and rebuild was undertaken in which the church was completed in its current form in 2012.

KEBUN BARU BIRDSINGING CLUB

Near 159 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 5

The largest bird singing and display arena in Singapore, Kebun Baru Birdsinging Club, located at the foot of Ang Mo Kio Town Garden West, attracts bird keepers and enthusiasts from all over Singapore. The origin

of the club dates back to the 1970s, when three zebra dove enthusiasts living in Ang Mo Kio began meeting up regularly with their caged birds at the present location of Kebun Baru Birdsinging Club, hanging their cages on trees. In 1987, they applied to erect poles so that more enthusiasts could join them.

Over time, as the club grew, more poles were erected. Bird owners usually arrive as early as 5.30am in the morning and many stay until late in the afternoon as the club serves as a space for them and the birds to socialise.

Today, the venue can accommodate more than 1,000 cages and regularly hosts bird singing competitions. One of the founders of the club, Teng Leng Foo, also runs a traditional cage making business at Block 159, next to the arena.

MERLIONS OF ANG MO KIO

Ang Mo Kio was one of the first places where the concept of Residents' Committees (RCs)



Merlion statues at Ang Mo Kio, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

was tested in 1978. Formed with the help of their Member of Parliament, RCs are meant to create and nurture grass-roots community involvement and activities. The scheme was deemed successful and was replicated across neighbourhoods in Singapore.

In Ang Mo Kio, an RC is behind one of Ang Mo Kio's most iconic sights, a pair of stone merlions along Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1. These merlions are so iconic that they are often used in wayfinding for residents, as they are the only such sculptures outside the city area. The idea of erecting these sculptures came about in 1998, when the RC in Ang Mo Kio was brainstorming on how to make the precinct more distinctive.

One of the members of the RC, Khoo Kim Seng, recalled that the residents had wanted to erect something symbolic, and which would distinguish the area as Ang Mo Kio. Stone lions and elephants were suggested

but came across as evoking temple entrances. When the merlion was proposed, it was met with enthusiasm, as residents felt that it could represent the multicultural and multi-ethnic character of Singapore and symbolised strength. Moreover, as no other towns had merlion sculptures, it would clearly set Ang Mo Kio apart from them.

As such, the RC commissioned a pair of 2.5-metre-tall merlion statues to be sculpted in China from pink granite, at a cost of \$30,000. In 2002, however, after media reporting on the sculptures, Singapore Tourism Board requested for the merlions to be removed as the design was trademarked by the agency. Negotiations between the board and the RC ensued, with the residents highlighting that the statues were well taken care of. The agency eventually allowed the merlions to remain on the condition that the merlions would be properly maintained.

STORIES OF OLD IN A NEW TOWN



Ang Mo Kio Joint Temple, 2011
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

When Ang Mo Kio new town was built, the communities that resettled here brought along their institutions such as temples and churches as well. Though housed in new buildings today, these community institutions have rich histories that give us a glimpse into pockets of Singapore's past.

ANG MO KIO JOINT TEMPLE (宏茂桥联合庙)

791 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1

Comprising three temples originally from Ang Mo Kio's former villages, Ang Mo Kio Joint Temple was first built in 1978. The

three temples, Gao Lin Gong, Kim Eang Tong and Leng San Giam, were affected by redevelopment of Ang Mo Kio in the 1970s and formed the joint temple to lease this site. The location of this present temple was formerly known as Ge Ji Kar ("foot of the fruit trees" in Hokkien) to the locals. The current building was completed in 2011 and the temple remains a gathering place for former villagers today.

Gao Lin Gong (椽林宫)

Gao Lin Gong, the oldest of the three, was said to be established by four immigrants from Nan An county, Fujian province, China.



Former opera stage of Gao Lin Gong at Kow Tiow Kio, undated
Courtesy of Gao Lin Gong

According to the temple, these immigrants, of the surname Huang, brought a statue of their patron deity, Xing Fu Da Ren, from the temple in their village Yu Hu Chun when they came to Singapore. They settled at Kow Tiow Kio and formally founded the temple in 1888, based on the date carved on a temple artefact commissioned during the founding. The current joint temple is located where Gao Lin Gong was originally founded.

Also called Tua Lang Kong (“temple of the lords” in Hokkien), Gao Lin Gong functioned as a family temple of the Huangs until the 1950s-60s. The area where it was located was dubbed Kow Tiow Kio Tua Lang Kong. In 1962, the worshippers built a new concrete building to house the temple. Festivities were held on the 23rd day of the eighth lunar month to celebrate the birthday of Xing Fu Da Ren. As more deities, Zhu Fu Da Ren, Li Fu Da Ren and Yang Fu Yuan Shuai, were added later, the temple combined the feast days of the deities and organised a five-day celebration from the 22nd to 26th days of the eighth lunar month instead. It was said that these festivities were even grander than the celebration of Chinese New Year as worshippers would come with offerings including roast pigs to celebrate and seek blessings.

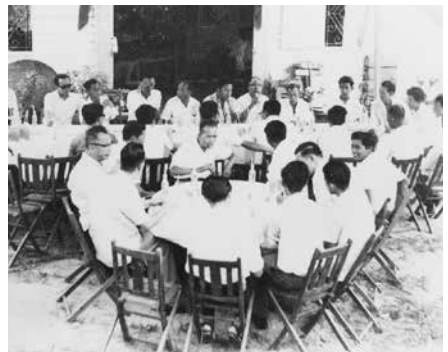
The temple has always been popular with worshippers seeking divine help with daily life and was famed for brewing herbal medicines for those with health concerns. Worshippers would have to seek divine help through a

consultation with a medium. Koh Lian Wah (b. 1949), former villager of Kow Tiow Kio, volunteered as a sedan bearer with the temple during such divine consultation sessions when the medium was in trance. He recalls, “The temple helped many of the villagers by giving free herbal medicine to the needy. In those days, many people were poor and could not afford medical treatment.” Today, the temple continues to maintain a herb garden to help its worshippers and is known for long queues during its weekly divine consultation sessions.

Kim Eang Tong (金英堂)

Founded in 1961 at Cheok Sua, near Mayflower estate, Kim Eang Tong is the only temple in Singapore dedicated to Kim Eang sect, a mystical religious order based on precepts of Buddhism and Taoism. The sect was founded at Luofu mountain, a site long associated with Taoism located in Huizhou, Guangdong province, China. In China, the sect was exclusive to Hakka Chinese.

The origins of Kim Eang Tong in Singapore date back to 1959, when three men seeking a spiritual master were directed to one such person living in a village at Bukit Panjang. The spiritual master, by the name of Zhang Guan Hu, was of the Kim Eang order and had reportedly received divine instructions to receive non-Hakka disciples and thus took the three men in.



A feast with the temple's followers outside the original Kim Eang Tong building at Cheok Sua village, near present-day Mayflower estate, undated
Courtesy of Kim Eang Tong



Kim Eang Tong at Cheok Sua village, undated
Courtesy of Kim Eang Tong

By drawing on divine revelations, one of the disciples, Hu Jin Fu, who was of Anxi Hokkien descent, thus established Kim Eang Tong at Cheok Sua village. The temple's devotees then were mainly Hakka, and their rituals and practices were viewed with suspicion by the villagers, who were Hokkien. This was especially so as the initiation rituals included slashing with a sabre, which appeared similar to secret society rituals then. In addition, the temple's name contained "Tong" ("hall" in Mandarin, a word commonly used in the names of Chinese secret societies). At one point, the temple was even asked by the authorities to cease operations on suspicion that it was associated with secret societies.

Within a few years, however, the temple had established itself in Ang Mo Kio as a place to seek divine help for spiritual protection and illnesses. It became particularly known for its talismans and the master of the temple was known for his experience in traditional Chinese

medicine. The temple had to relocate in 1975 due to redevelopment.

Leng San Giam (龙岩)

Leng San Giam was established by immigrants of the surname Chew, from Yongchun county, Fujian province, China, who built the temple at Cheng San Road in the 1950s. Dedicated to the deity Fa Chu Gong, the temple was known for works of miracles and giving out "lucky numbers" for gambling.

According to the worshippers, Leng San Giam was built after a group of devotees requested numbers from the deity, who instead directed them to seek the numbers from another temple, Sam Ann Fu, in Yio Chu Kang. However, when the nine devotees arrived at Sam Ann Fu, the principal deity, Tan Hu, was not in the temple as it had been invited to the home of another devotee.

These devotees finally tracked down the location of the deity at Pasir Panjang and sent a dispatch to bring the statue to them. However, it took several hours before the statue arrived. In the meantime, most of the devotees had given up waiting and returned home, leaving only nine devotees awaiting the deity's arrival.

When the statue arrived, the nine devotees divined a set of numbers which turned out to be the winning lottery numbers for the second prize the next day. As such, the nine worshippers built a permanent opera stage



Rituals during the inauguration of Leng San Giam at Ang Mo Kio Joint Temple, 1983
Courtesy of Leng San Giam



Worshipper performing a ritual during the inauguration of Leng San Giam at Ang Mo Kio Joint Temple, 1983
Courtesy of Leng San Giam

for Sam Ann Fu and a temple for Leng San Giam. The land for the temple was said to be donated by Chinese businessman Tan Boon Khak, brother of rubber magnate Tan Lark Sye. What remained after the building works was then divided among the nine, which amounted to approximately \$13,000 per person then. According to temple devotees, the deity had instructed Leng San Giam to be built on a specific plot to not be affected by redevelopment in the future. However, having

no idea what redevelopment was, the villagers did not comply after negotiations for that site failed.

Today, Sam Ann Fu and Leng San Giam continue to be closely connected, with deity exchanges organised regularly. It was said that the early statues of Fa Chu Gong and Tan Hu were carved from the same piece of driftwood in China.

CHU SHENG TEMPLE (聚圣庙)

48 Ang Mo Kio Street 61

Like most temples in Singapore today, Chu Sheng Temple houses three older temples. These temples were formerly from villages in Yio Chu Kang. Affected by redevelopment in the late 1970s, the temples decided to combine and built Chu Sheng Temple in 1981. As a majority of the temples' worshippers were Hokkien, the temple building was designed in the traditional Hokkien architectural style, characterised by pronounced curvatures in the roof ridges. Former villagers still gather at Chu Sheng Temple regularly. The temple is also active in community work such as giving red packets and bursaries to the needy in Ang Mo Kio today.

Chee Hock Keng (集福宫)

Originally located at 11th milestone Yio Chu Kang Road, the temple was established by a



Chu Sheng Temple, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

family of the surname Lim. It was unclear when the temple was founded. In 1918, the villagers raised funds to build a new temple and opera stage, naming it Chee Hock Keng. Initially, the temple only worshipped one deity, Lin Fu Da Ren. Another deity, Xiao Fu Da Ren, was added after a devotee, Lin Hao, had a dream foretelling the arrival of the deity to the village and benefitting the villagers.

Chee Hock Keng was specifically patronised by farmers as Xiao Fu Da Ren was known for protecting livestock. Farmers, especially those rearing pigs, would bring ailing pigs to the temple to ask for healing. When swine flu struck, they would also pray for protection over their herds.

During the festivities for Xiao Fu Da Ren held in the 12th lunar month, there would be over ten days of opera performances. It was common to see over a thousand pigs' heads, chickens and ducks offered to the deity. Some devotees would even send pigs in small lorries for offerings. According to Aw Chui Seng (b. 1939), former chairman of the temple, there used to be a saying, "If you want to watch opera, go to Lorong Koo Chye Sheng Hong Temple. If you want to see pigs' heads, come to Chee Hock Keng."

Today, Chee Hock Keng is known for granting worshippers' wishes to pass driving examinations. It is also a popular temple among businessmen who seek blessings for their ventures.

Long Chuan Giam (龙泉岩)

Originally from Lao Pah ("old plantation" in Hokkien), Yio Chu Kang, near former Track 24, Long Chuan Giam's origins began in 1930 when a Hokkien immigrant named Ong Zhen Long brought with him incense ash from his ancestral temple in Huangtian village in Nan An county, Fujian province, China, and a statue of the deity Fa Zhu Gong. In the 1940s, another devotee, Ong Xi Shui, donated land to build a temple, which was then named Long Chuan Giam. An opera stage was constructed in 1952.

The temple, which also worships Qingshui Zushi, is known for holding a grand prayer to the Jade Emperor every ten years. The temple is affiliated with Longxuyan Jinshuiguan at Liuxun Sanhemiao.

Hwa Tong Hoo (华堂府)

Hwa Tong Hoo used to be located at 11th milestone Yio Chu Kang Road, around the bend in the road which gave rise to the local name "Kak Tow Au" ("Behind the corner" in Hokkien). Established as a family temple in 1918 by immigrants of the surname See from Anxi, Fujian province, the original temple was at Bukit Ho Swee. Later, as members of the See clan settled in Yio Chu Kang, they built a temple here as well and named it Hwa Tong Hoo after their ancestral temple.

Today, the See clan still gathers regularly at the temple, especially during festivals such as the birthday of the deity See Hoo Ong Ya during the 10th lunar month.

LIUXUN SANHEMIAO (六巡三合庙)

4-6 Ang Mo Kio Street 63

The temples making up Liuxun Sanhemiao were from a kampong in Yio Chu Kang known as Lak Xun, or Liuxun in Mandarin. All the temples have their roots in Quanzhou, Fujian province, China.

Lak Xun village mainly comprised Hokkien and some Teochew Chinese farmers who grew vegetables, fruit trees, and reared chickens and pigs. The most common surnames were Ong and Toh. Faced with resettlement in the 1980s, the three temples combined to form the joint temple and leased the present site in 1988. The current temple building was completed in 1989.

Sam Ann Fu (三安府)

Sam Ann Fu was founded in the early 1900s by Anxi Hokkien immigrants of the surname Chen. The temple is dedicated to the deities, The Three Chen Brothers, and most of its patrons are of the same surname.



Liuxun Sanhemiao, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Closely affiliated with Leng San Giam (See page 44 for more information), which used to be at Cheng San Road, Sam Ann Fu regularly invites Leng San Giam's deities to preside at its festivities and vice versa. The mediums of both temples would also sometimes direct their devotees to each other for advice.

In the past, Sam Ann Fu's worshippers would often invite the deities to their home for various reasons such as birthday celebrations, first month celebrations for babies, or *Kong Teck*, where rituals were held to make merit for one's ancestors. To invite the deity, one would have to be issued a ticket at a provision shop called Hock Nam at Boh Sua Tian Road. The ticket would cost around 20 to 50 cents. Fire-walking rituals, where the medium and believers walked over burning charcoal, were also held at the temple during specific festivals.

Longxuyan Jinshuiguan (龙须岩金水馆)

Longxuyan Jinshuiguan is one of the several ancestral temples established by Hokkien immigrants of the surname Ong from Xiangyun township, Nan An county, Fujian province. These immigrants also founded Long Chuan Giam at Yio Chu Kang Road 11th milestone, presently located at Chu Sheng Temple (See page 46 for more information).

Longxuyan Jinshuiguan was founded sometime in the 1940s when the villagers living in Lak Xun branched the incense from

another temple established in Hougang. In 1983, Longxuyan Jinshuiguan combined with another such temple founded in Nei Dong Cheng village in Choa Chu Kang, which was also facing troubles with relocation. The two temples thus combined resources to maintain their religious activities.

Hong San Chin Huat Temple Association (凤山堂进法殿全盛宫)

A combined temple within a combined temple, Hong San Chin Huat Temple Association comprises three temples: Feng Shan Tang (凤山堂), Jin Fa Dian (进法殿), and Quan Sheng Gong (全盛宫). The ancestral temples of these establishments were from villages in Nan An.

Feng Shan Tang was founded in 1902 in a village known as Lak Xun Kopi Sua Kar ("Lak Xun Coffee Hill Foot" in Hokkien). The temple was set up by Chinese immigrants from Fujian province, Nan An county. The immigrants brought along with them incense ashes from their village temple as protection and established a temple where they settled. The village was known for its community spirit and strong bonds between villagers. The deities in the temple were also often invited home by the villagers for consultation, protection, and advice. Asking for lottery numbers is not allowed in the temple.

Inside the temple, there is a Y-shaped stick made of rambutan wood. According to Xu

Yuan Hua, a former villager from Lak Xun, his grand aunt fell ill in 1933 and requested for his grandfather to invoke the deity, Lord Xu, to heal her. Xu described, "My grandfather went into a trance and wrote a spell on paper, whereupon she consumed it and recovered. While still in trance, he requested a branch from a rambutan tree nearby to be cut to serve as the deity's body as there was no statue made yet. Sometime later, a family from Malaya visited the village bearing a statue of Lord Xu. They claimed that they had a dream that the deity instructed them to bring their statue of him to Lak Xun village in Singapore and to look for my grandfather and deliver it to him. In the past, villagers who were ill would shave off bits of the wood from the stick and take it as 'medicine'".

SWEE KOW KUAN TEMPLE (水沟葛岸馆)

46 Ang Mo Kio Street 61

Swee Kow Kuan is established by a group known as Weng Shan Hong, who were people of the patriarchal lineage with the surname Hong, and whose ancestral home is Ying Du township in Nan An county. The ancestral temple in Ying Du was built towards the end of the Ming dynasty.

In Singapore, the first Swee Kow Kuan was established in 1905 in north Buona Vista. The temple was then known as He Sheng Guan Wu

Wang Fu Ye Qing Miao (和升馆五王府爷清庙), based on a stone tablet unearthed in 2005 during building works. The tablet established the year the temple was founded and named the 51 donors who contributed to the building fund.

When the British acquired Pasir Panjang and Buona Vista for military purposes, Swee Kow Kuan moved to Holland Road in the 1920s. In 1967, the land occupied by the temple was once again acquired and it moved to Choa Chu Kang.

Besides the temple at north Buona Vista, there were also two other temples established later by immigrants from the same lineage at Yio Chu Kang Road and Sembawang Road.

In 1977, the three temples of the same lineage merged to form Swee Kow Kuan. They secured their present site at Ang Mo Kio in 1980 and the combined temple building was completed in 1982.

BETHESDA HALL

601 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 4

The history of Bethesda Hall can be traced back to the 1860s, when a group of believers of the Brethren Movement began meeting at the home of an English businessman by the name of Philip Robinson for regular fellowship. The Assemblies of Brethren is a Christian Protestant movement originating in the early 1800s.



Swee Kow Kuan, 2023

Courtesy of National Heritage Board

In 1864, the believers rented a room at Bencoolen Street for public worship. Two years later, the assembly erected a chapel building at 77 Bras Basah Road, inaugurating it with a short dawn service. The assembly expanded over the years. In 1936, it opened its first branch church at Katong, and after the war, more assemblies were established around the island.

By the 1980s, the chapel at Bras Basah could not fully accommodate its worshippers. The government had also acquired the land it stood on in the early 1980s. Another Brethren church, located in Geylang, also had its site acquired at around the same time. The two assemblies thus appealed to the government for a new site and were granted the lease to its current site in Ang Mo Kio. The church building was completed in 1986 and has since undergone several rounds of extension works and renovations. The 30-year lease was renewed in 2013 and the building underwent major renovation in 2015 to cater to the needs and growth of the church. Today, the church actively organises religious and outreach programmes for its community.

CHEK SIAN TNG (积善堂)

10 Ang Mo Kio Street 44

Chek Sian Tng is a temple established by the religious order of Xiantianjiao, a Chinese sect

which merges key teachings of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. The temple was founded in Singapore in the early 1900s by a Xiantianjiao teacher who came from Chaoyang county, Liaoning province. A temple (Tong Sian Tng) was first built at Devonshire Road for male devotees. Two temples for female devotees were established later, Sian Teck Tng at Cuppage Road, and Chek Sian Tng at 10 Kramat Road for female devotees. Those who entered the ascetic order had to become vegetarian, abstain from smoking and drinking, but were allowed to keep their surnames, hair, and family relations.

Several residents at Chek Sian Tng were girls given to the temples. In the past, infant girls were sometimes left at the temples for reasons such as the parents desiring only male children, astrological readings that suggested the infant girls were unfavourable to their parents, or that these girls were orphaned.

The routine for the residents started at five in the morning every day, and they would chant sutras, clean the premises, cook, and housekeep. Many of the nuns and devotees were Peranakan Chinese, including four of the abbesses. In the early days, they would make Peranakan pastries and cakes for fundraising, as well as vegetarian food.



Chek Sian Tng, 2023

Courtesy of National Heritage Board

The temple operated at Kramat Road until the 1980s when the land was acquired for redevelopment. In 1984, the temple moved to its current site in Ang Mo Kio.

The main festivals of the temple are the feast days of Guanyin, held on the 19th day of second lunar month (the birthday of Guanyin), the 19th day of the sixth lunar month (Guanyin Enlightenment day), and the 19th day of the ninth lunar month (Guanyin Renunciation day).

Darrelle Bay Hui Kam (b. 1965), the last girl to be taken in by the temple, shared:

"I was adopted by the temple because my mother only wanted to keep my two brothers. My two sisters were given to a temple in Geylang. There were quite a lot of orphans here. Life in the temple was full of love with many kind-hearted people. There was no lack of love in my teenage years. I have many godmothers. My childhood was just like other children. I went to school, played with neighbours' kids. Some worshippers' children had grown up, so they would give me their books and toys. During the school holidays, I would help to bake cakes and goodies to be given to the worshippers. When I grew up and

decided to get married, it was a struggle to break it to the zhaigu ("nuns" in Mandarin). They were worried if I would be well taken care of but finally accepted my decision as fate."

POTONG PASIR JOINT TEMPLE (波东巴西联合庙)

8 Ang Mo Kio Street 44

The temples housed in this joint temple were all originally from Kampong Potong Pasir. Having to relocate due to redevelopment works during the 1970s, the five temples combined to form Potong Pasir Joint Temples Association in 1982 and the temple building was completed in 1987.

Hoon Hong Tian Haw Boo (云峰天后庙)

Established in the early 1900s by immigrants from Guangxi Province, China, the temple is dedicated to Tin Hau, or the Heavenly Empress. The temple was originally sited near St Michael's Estate before it moved to Kampong Potong Pasir. It was said that the statue of the deity was carved out of a log found floating on a tributary of Kallang River near St Michael's Estate.



Potong Pasir Joint Temple, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Tiong Sing Sze (天性祠)

Tiong Sing Sze was founded in 1922 by an immigrant from Putian, China. This is a temple of the religious order of San Yi Jiao, also referred to as San Jiao, which combined the teachings of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. The principal deity is one of the founders of the sect.

Sam Choon Keng Liong Wah Huay (三尊宫龙华会)

This temple, which is dedicated to worshipping three different forms of Buddha, was founded in the 1940s at the residence of a grateful devotee after she was cured of an illness. The temple was initially located at Jalan Kolam Ayer before moving to Kampong Potong Pasir in the 1960s.

Hoong Hong Koon Beo and Hup Heng Kwang Beo Association (云峰古庙; 合兴光庙)

Hoong Hong Koon Beo was founded by Cantonese villagers residing at Kampong Potong Pasir during the 1930s. Using incense ash from the temple, some villagers later set up another temple by the name of Hup Heng Kwang Beo. Both temples combined subsequently when faced with resettlement.

ST THOMAS ORTHODOX SYRIAN CATHEDRAL

650 Yio Chu Kang Road

St Thomas Orthodox Syrian Cathedral is the only church serving the Orthodox Syrian Christians in Singapore. The Orthodox Syrian Christians were documented to have held worship services in Singapore as early as 1928, though it was only in 1959 that they had their own church building at Topaz Road.

In 1928, the first documented visit of an Orthodox Syrian Christian priest took place. Reverend Father Abo Alexios arrived from Kerala and conducted services (Holy Qurbana). Holy communion services were held in Malayalam, the native language of the Orthodox Syrian community here, who were largely Malayalee immigrants from Kerala, India.

Over the years, as more Malayalees migrated to Singapore for work, the local Orthodox Syrian community grew in numbers. By the 1950s, the congregation had grown to around 75 families and a church building thus became necessary.



St Thomas Orthodox Syrian Church, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

In the 1950s, the devotees purchased a plot of land at Topaz Road to construct their church. Consecrated on 27 December 1959, the church operated until 1979 when the land was acquired by the government for development of the Pan Island Expressway. In 1980, the church purchased its current site and the new building was consecrated on 18 December 1983.

Membership grew steadily and in 1997, the church was granted Cathedral status. Today, the Malayalee heritage can still be seen through their worship services and events. The Cathedral holds the Holy Qurbana in Malayalam and English on alternate Sundays. Both religious and cultural *perunnaals* (“festivals” in Malayalam) are celebrated by the community.

FIRST EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH

652 Yio Chu Kang Road

The roots of First Evangelical Reformed Church can be traced back to 1962 when a bible study group was organised at Monk’s Hill Secondary School. The group grew in membership over time and established an outreach mission in a kampong house at River Valley Road in 1976.

In 1982, the congregation was instituted as a church called Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, located at 356J River Valley Road. It was renamed in 1987 after a second church was founded. In 1994, the church moved to its current site.

SEMBAWANG BAPTIST CHURCH

140 Casuarina Road

Sembawang Baptist Church started in 1955, when a Baptist Christian by the name of Tan Huan Hin offered the use of his late brother’s house in Nee Soon village along Thomson Road to the Southern Baptist Convention, a Christian denomination based in the United States. The fledgling congregation was headed by Mdm Tan Kiat Jin, a missionary who had arrived from Swatow, China. Services were held in Mandarin, Cantonese, and Teochew as the worshippers were mainly Chinese of different dialect groups.

With the help of Southern Baptist Convention, the congregation bought a shophouse at 140 Casuarina Road to function as a centre for worship and fellowship. As the congregation grew, Sembawang Baptist Church, named after its location at Sembawang Hills estate, was



Sembawang Baptist Church, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

officially established in June 1958. Since then, the church building has undergone rounds of rebuilding, expansion, and renovations to cater to its growing membership.

CHURCH OF ST VINCENT DE PAUL

301 Yio Chu Kang Road

Located at the eastern end of Ang Mo Kio, Church of St Vincent de Paul has its beginnings in the 1950s when French Catholic priest Henri Saussard began ministering to the mainly Tamil Catholic community in Jalan Kayu in 1959. Masses were held in the home of a devotee by the name of J. S. Gomez. The parish later became known as St Vincent de Paul and was described as a “ministry to the poor” as volunteers would regularly distribute food and essential items to the poor, most of them rubber tappers, and vegetable and pig farmers, living in Jalan Kayu.

In 1963, a shophouse at Jalan Kayu was purchased to function as a chapel. However, the space soon proved insufficient as the congregation grew. In 1966, the diocese secured a plot of land formerly used to dump felled coconut trees to build a church. In November 1970, the new church was officially

opened and blessed by the Archbishop of Singapore and Malacca, Michael Olcomendy.

Over time, the congregation of the church has evolved as Ang Mo Kio and Yio Chu Kang underwent redevelopment. As its congregation grew, the church building no longer sufficed in meeting their needs. As such, in 1995, the church underwent major rebuilding and upgrading.

CARRYING ON THE FAMILY’S BUSINESS

While not known to many, Ang Mo Kio is home to long-time businesses, some of which have been operating since the area’s kampong days. The owners and their families have since grown these businesses to cater to customers in the heartlands.

Ban Nee Chen Nursery

301 Yio Chu Kang Road

A favourite neighbourhood stop today for potted plants, Ban Nee Chen Nursery was established by Ng Tze Hua (b. 1919), who immigrated from Puning county, Guangdong province, before the war. Ng, a Teochew, learnt the nursery trade from fellow Teochew kinsmen who had started plant nurseries in



Church of St Vincent de Paul, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board



Ng Tze Hua at the family's nursery along Lorong Kinchir, Kow Tiow Kio, c. 1970s
Courtesy of Ban Nee Chen Nursery

Singapore. Equipped with the knowledge, Ng started his own nursery first at 4th milestone Upper Serangoon Road before moving to Lorong Kinchir, near the first bridge of Kow Tiow Kio where Australian International School is today.

In the early years, Ng and his family planted mainly *dieffenbachia* sp., called *wan nian qing* in Mandarin. The plants would be grown in flower beds on the ground and harvested for sale to other nurseries and families living in landed houses, especially those residing in Serangoon Gardens. As business grew, the family diversified into growing flowers such as *magnolia chempaca*, dahlia, orchids, and gardenia.

Ng Jim Ming (b. 1959) was one of nine children in the family and recalled having to work long hours at the nursery. He recalled:

"All of us children would help out after school. My sisters would help with housework and the boys would help in the nursery. My mother, Teo Bak Khim, was responsible for the business' success as well. She was fearless. I remember that in the 1960s or so, my father offended some secret society members as he refused to pay protection fees. Those gangsters would come in the middle of the night to destroy

our racks and plants. My mother was undeterred and would just restore the racks and plants and have them back up, and continued business as usual. When she was pregnant with my other siblings, she continued working even when near giving birth."

In 1968, the family formally registered Ban Nee Chen Nursery, naming it after the plant they started with (Ban Nee Chen is the Teochew pronunciation of *wan nian qing*). The nursery continued to operate at Kow Tiow Kio until the early 1980s, when redevelopment took off. Ban Nee Chen then moved to Joan Road near Upper Thomson Road. The business evolved alongside Singapore. It expanded into landscaping for public spaces and organisations, and leasing plants, as newly established banks, schools, and offices rented plants for decoration and special events. Ng shared, "When Singapore started its garden city drive, there were many projects to help green Singapore. Ban Nee Chen took on many such projects. We also provided plants for events such as graduation ceremonies of schools!"

Now run by the third generation of the Ng family, Ban Nee Chen has since become a household name in the plant nursery trade. In 2018, Ban Nee Chen came full circle when it returned to Ang Mo Kio, with the opening of its first retail shop at Block 226A Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1.

Plum Village Restaurant

16 Jalan Leban

The oldest Hakka restaurant in Singapore, Plum Village Restaurant's story began in 1969, when founder Lai Kai Loong partnered a Hakka chef to start a Hakka eatery. The chef had arrived from Hong Kong and was keen to promote Hakka food culture in Singapore while providing food for his kinsmen. A number of clansmen from Hakka associations joined the venture and the restaurant opened in Toa Payoh.

Lai's son, Lai Fak Nian (b. 1947), recalled that he would help in the kitchen and learnt how

to cook from the chef. However, the venture failed and the restaurant closed down in the late 1970s. At that time, Lai Kai Loong was running a sundry shop at the present location of Plum Village Restaurant. Most of the shops in the estate, like Lai's shop, catered to British military personnel and their families living in northern Singapore. Lai's shop sold mainly "white goods", products popular with British families such as kitchen utensils, toys, women's clothes, baby prams, and Christmas presents.

When the British began withdrawing in the 1970s, business began to decline. In 1983, Lai Fak Nian proposed to his father that the sundry shop be converted into a Hakka restaurant. Naming the restaurant Plum Village after their ancestral hometown Meixian district (Mei in Mandarin means "plum"), Lai Fak Nian began cooking up dishes based on his grandmother's recipes, including classic Hakka dishes such as abacus seeds and preserved vegetable pork belly.

Lai Fak Nian shared, "Hakka food is peasant cuisine. It is salty, fat, and fragrant, meant to sustain farmers who worked hard for long hours. They needed salt to replenish minerals lost, fat to sustain them through the day and not feel hungry. At the same time, it means we could not charge too high, as this is farmer's food. The four Hakka dishes that sustained the business through the years are —salted chicken, preserved vegetables with pork belly, abacus seeds, and tofu."

Lai's son has recently started learning the ropes of running the restaurant. Aside from providing Hakka cuisine, Plum Village has increasingly been acting as a centre to promote Hakka culture by holding cooking sessions and cultural activities. Lai Fak Nian has also published a Hakka recipe book to ensure the recipes are passed down to the next generation. Lai said, "At the start, I had decided that for Plum Village to work, we had to introduce our food to non-Hakkas, and not just focus on Hakka customers since we are a minority. In the first few months, it was hard to

get non-Hakkas to accept our food. Over time, acceptance has grown among non-Hakkas. Hakka Chinese are around 20-30% of our customer base."

Gim Tim Restaurant

157 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 4

One of the few restaurants in Singapore serving traditional Hokkien fare today, Gim Tim Restaurant was started by the Oh family who lived at Kow Tiow Kio, near present-day Mayflower estate. The Ohs had immigrated to Singapore in the early 1900s and settled in the area. According to second-generation owner of Gim Tim Restaurant, Oh Cheng Kiat (b. 1965), his father Oh Joo Chong tried his hands at different jobs such as driving and cooking before venturing into selling firewood to kampongs in the western part of Singapore during the 1960s.

On his rounds to these kampongs, he often met villagers who asked for recommendations for people who could *ban tou* ("make the tables" in Hokkien, referring to caterers who could cook for events such as weddings). As Oh had cooking experience, he decided to establish a catering business and was soon touring the kampongs in the west, cooking for one event after another. The catering business was formally established in 1975.

Oh Cheng Kiat recalled that as a child, he and his brothers often had to help out in these events. In those days, families who hired a caterer would draw up the menu together. The caterer, such as Oh's father, would then take the family to the town to shop for the ingredients. As early as a week before the feast, the caterer would have to start processing the ingredients, such as soaking sea cucumbers and sharks' fins to rehydrate them. Such work was often done at the kampong where the event was held, and the caterer would live with the family for a few days. Besides the ingredients, Oh remembered that his father would also have to provide cooking utensils, crockery, and cooking fuel.

The younger Oh shared:

“As kids, we looked forward to going with our father for such feasts. We had to work, but we also got to eat at the feast and play with other children in the villages. Usually, the tasks given to us would be to clean the innards of chickens and ducks, or even pigs. I remember having to clean buckets of duck innards as duck liver could be used for cold plates and duck kidneys for soups. Cleaning the sand from the innards took a lot of effort.”

Most of the villages Oh catered for were Hokkien and praying to Tian Gong, or the Jade Emperor, was a must the night before the main event such as weddings. Oh recalled that animals for offerings were slaughtered in the middle of the night by butchers, and children would be kept away from the scene.

The Oh family continued operating their catering business from Kow Tiow Kio until the early 1980s. Faced with redevelopment, they moved to Phua village at Nee Soon and continued their business from there. When Nee Soon underwent redevelopment a few years later, the Ohs then began renting factories for their operations.

At the same time, the family felt that it was time to start a restaurant so that it would be

easy for potential customers to locate them and try their food. After some searching, they landed upon their current premises at 157 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 4. Gim Tim Restaurant was thus opened in 1989.



Gim Tim Restaurant in Ang Mo Kio, 1989
Courtesy of Gim Tim Restaurant



Catering for outdoor events, 1992
Courtesy of Gim Tim Restaurant



Gim Tim Restaurant's premises at Phua village in former Nee Soon, c. 1970s
Courtesy of Gim Tim Restaurant

Oh Cheng Kiat shared, “In the early years, the food we served were typically Hokkien, which meant big portions which were filling. By the 1980s, the taste of Singaporeans had evolved as they became more well-to-do. We started introducing new ingredients such as scallops and signature dishes. I remember when we introduced scallops, the elderly scolded us and asked why we served fish cakes at a banquet! There were also a lot more events requiring catering, such as fund-raising banquets organised by People’s Association and temples.”

Today, the third generation of Oh’s are helping to run the business. While the menu has since expanded to include Cantonese and Teochew cuisine, Gim Tim Restaurant remains known for its traditional Hokkien dishes such as fish maw’s soup and braised meat buns.

Tungsan Food Industries

554 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 10

Known for its variety of sauces and condiments, Tungsan Food Industries was founded in 1973 by Tan Siah Wee. Born in Singapore in 1944, Tan was sent by his father back to their family home in China when he was seven years old, returning only when he was 14. When Tan returned to Singapore, people often mistook him as China-born, and nicknamed him “Tungsua kia” (“Kid from China” in Hokkien).

Tan took on a variety of jobs in his youth, as a hawker assistant, kitchen helper, and finally a stall assistant at a wet market stall specialising in chilli pastes. The experience inspired Tan to start his own business making such pastes. With a loan of \$500 from a relative, Tan rented a space at Jalan Kayu to produce chilli paste. As the business grew, Tan saw the need to have a shopfront. In the early 1980s, he purchased the current shop at Block 554 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 10 and decided to start a provision shop there, naming it Tungsan after his childhood nickname.

Tan’s son, Edwin, now works as general manager and managing director at the company. He recalled, “Back then, the shop

space was too big to only sell the pastes. So my father sold everything, even toilet paper, soft drinks, marbles, and candy floss. Chili paste was only a side line. During the school holidays, we would work in the shop to earn some pocket money.”

Over time, the family added more pastes to their product line, such as pastes for chicken curry, laksa, *asam* fish, and *mee rebus*. By the mid-1980s, the business had grown so much that the family had to rent factory space to manufacture the pastes. The business evolved to become a supplier to other businesses in the food services sector, such as restaurants, caterers, and even food manufacturers.

An established brand in sauces and condiments today, Tungsan Food Industries’ flagship store at Ang Mo Kio still retained its heartland charm. Today, you can still see the original counter where the founder used to mix and pound spices for clients.



Tan and his family at the opening of the shop, 1980s
Courtesy of Tungsan Food Industries



Counter where Tan and his family would mix and pound spices for clients, undated
Courtesy of Tungsan Food Industries



Sam Mui Kuang Pottery, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Sam Mui Kuang Pottery

22 Jalan Kelulut

One of the oldest pottery workshops in Singapore, Sam Mui Kuang Pottery was established by Chua Eng Cheow (b. 1918), who immigrated from Chaozhou, China in 1936. Born into a village of potters, Chua grew up learning the ropes of the trade. When he arrived in Singapore, he started by working as a potter at Tau Heng workshop along Yio Chu Kang Road.

Around 1940, Chua and his brother, who had immigrated here as well, submitted plans to build their own pottery workshop in the area later named Jalan Hwi Yoh after the Chuas' kiln ("Hwi Yoh" refers to fire kiln in Teochew). Chua had noticed the high quality of clay at the site and wanted to establish his own business there. Due to the war, Chua only received approval for his plans in 1942, after the Japanese took over. Building the kiln took ten months and the workshop, named Tau Lian Heng, started production in 1943. Business was brisk during the Japanese Occupation and Chua produced sake bottles for the Japanese as well.

After the war, however, business suffered as cheaper pottery imports from China posed strong competition. Tau Lian Heng closed in 1946 before it was bought over by another company in 1948, which in turn sold it in 1949 to a marble works company called Sam Mui Kuang. Chua then entered into an agreement with Sam Mui Kuang where he would pay to rent the workshop from the company. In turn, Sam Mui Kuang would get a portion of the pottery produced to sell.

Chua's pottery business thrived in 1950s. To meet demand, he built a new kiln near Jalan Kayu in 1957, which closed later in 1975. In the 1960s, after a fire forced Sam Mui Kuang to close, Chua bought out all the shares and continued to use the name for his pottery workshop.

Sam Mui Kuang continued to operate at Jalan Hwi Yoh till 1994, when they had to relocate to make way for a flatted factory. The workshop moved to Jalan Kelulut and is run by Chua's children today.

EVOLVING ANG MO KIO

Like all other HDB towns, Ang Mo Kio is constantly evolving to meet the changing needs of residents. The town centre, once a showcase of HDB's achievements, had become dated by the 1990s as its cinemas closed. In addition, Oriental Emporium had already closed by the late 1980s when its parent holdings company liquidated in 1987.

In the 2000s, the development of AMK Hub gave a much-needed boost to the town centre. Integrating a new bus interchange built in 2002 and Ang Mo Kio MRT station, the sprawling AMK Hub was built on the site of the former Oriental Emporium. When it opened in 2007, the new shopping mall, boasting some 200

shops, turned the town centre into a vibrant hub once again.

Another site that underwent extensive revamping was Bishan Park. Between 2009 to 2011, the natural banks of Kallang River were restored and major landscaping works were carried out to create thematic parks, lotus ponds, and playgrounds. Officially opened on 17 March 2012 by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, the revamped park was renamed Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park and has since won multiple local and international awards for its urban design and natural landscape architecture.



Lotus pond at Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park, 2023
 Courtesy of National Heritage Board



Ang Mo Kio Town Centre, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

In 2022, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced plans to renew and transform Ang Mo Kio town centre, “We have further plans to upgrade and redesign our town centre, make it more enjoyable and accessible to residents, with more greenery, more seats, and more shelters, suitable for old people and also for young people.”

Renewal works for the town centre started in early 2023 with the long-term objective to turn the town centre into a community hub for Ang Mo Kio. Among the works are increased accessibility for people in wheelchairs and those who use personal mobility vehicles, improvements to shop fronts and building facades, a revamped children’s playground, and landscaping with more sheltered rest areas.

By 2030, Ang Mo Kio is expected to have a new MRT station that will act as an interchange between the North-South Line and Singapore’s eighth MRT Line, the Cross Island Line. The longest underground MRT

Line to date, Cross Island Line will reduce travelling time for commuters. The first phase aims to serve those living and working in Changi, Loyang and Ang Mo Kio. The new Ang Mo Kio station, estimated to cost \$644 million, is planned to have entrances that directly connect to residential blocks, AMK Hub and AMK Town Garden East. The existing Ang Mo Kio station will also be retrofitted and its concourse area reconfigured to integrate well with the upcoming station.

Further plans to rejuvenate the town are now underway. Housing redevelopment has kicked off in parts of Ang Mo Kio, with a new estate at Kebun Baru completed in 2018, blocks of flats undergoing neighbourhood renewal, and more land parcels released for new housing projects. Ang Mo Kio Swimming Complex was closed in December 2022 to be upgraded into a new sports facility with new features such as a sheltered pool and a gym. With all the upcoming plans and projects to renew the town, Ang Mo Kio is set to remake itself as a model housing town again.

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 Church of St Vincent de Paul
 First Evangelical Reformed Church
 Gim Tim Restaurant
 Housing & Development Board
 Hua Aik General Store
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SUGGESTED SHORT TRAIL ROUTES

ICONIC LANDMARKS

1.5 hours with public transport, 5.5 km

As the seventh housing town built by Housing & Development Board (HDB), Ang Mo Kio has unique buildings and sites that have since become iconic landmarks of the town. This trail highlights the iconic buildings and sites of Ang Mo Kio new town, which range from distinctive blocks to landscaped parks.

Start your exploration at [Ang Mo Kio Town Centre](#), one of the largest town centres built in the late 1970s. Walk toward Jubilee Square Shopping Mall and spot Block 710, the tallest block on the right of the central stage. Known as the “VIP Block” during the 1980s and 1990s, Block 710 was where visiting dignitaries, including Queen Elizabeth II and Chinese Premier Li Peng, were brought to get a bird’s-eye view of Singapore’s early housing achievements.



Next, walk through the town centre to reach [Masjid Al-Muttaqin](#). Built in 1980 to serve the Muslim community in Ang Mo Kio, the mosque is an iconic building that marks one of the entrances to the new town. Next, walk along Ang Mo Kio Avenue 6 and cross the road to reach [Ang Mo Kio Town Garden West](#).

This 21-hectare town garden was once the largest town park in Singapore. Built in 1983, it was designed by a Japanese contractor, who retained part of the area’s natural terrain and original vegetation.



Take a stroll to the western foot of the town garden to find [Kebun Baru Birdsinging Club](#), where bird enthusiasts have been gathering since the late 1970s. Formally established in 1987, this is the largest bird-singing and display area in Singapore.



Proceed next to Ang Mo Kio Avenue 3, take a bus to Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1, alight and cross the road to [Block 259](#). Dubbed “Clover Block” by locals after its distinctive shape, Block 259 is the only block of circular flats in Singapore. Completed in 1981, it was a pilot project by HDB to introduce more architectural variations in public housing estates.



Take a bus to Ang Mo Kio Town Centre and enjoy the view of [Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park](#) along the way. Originally called Bishan Park when it was constructed in 1986, the park was built around the Kallang River and incorporated the surrounding forests. Between 2009 and 2011, the park underwent extensive renovations and multiple ponds were built along the river, harking back to Ang Mo Kio’s kampong days when fish and lotus ponds were constructed along the river and its tributaries.



Alight the bus and walk to [Ang Mo Kio Town Council](#). Launched in 1986, the groundbreaking town council became the first of its kind after a successful pilot programme. Like all subsequent town councils, it aims to foster resident participation in estate maintenance.

Optional: Visit one of the last dragon playgrounds left in Singapore. Located at Ang Mo Kio Avenue 3, the [dragon playground](#) was conceptualised in 1979. From here, you can head to Pine Garden, a popular heartland bakery that has been operating at Ang Mo Kio Avenue 10 since 1984, or cross the street to Block 545 to visit Tungsan Food Industries, which opened in the 1980s, for homemade sauces and pastes.



HIDDEN HEARTLAND GEMS

1.5 hours with public transport, 7.5 km

Hidden in plain sight, many sites around Ang Mo Kio feature objects and installations that reveal lesser-known stories about their communities. This trail takes you on a journey of discovering often overlooked gems in Ang Mo Kio and the interesting facts behind them.

Begin at [Chu Sheng Temple](#), a short walk from Yio Chu Kang MRT. This temple houses three older temples from former villages in Yio Chu Kang. Behind the temple’s gates, you can see two stone sculptures known as Xia Ma Shi (“stone for dismounting a horse” in Mandarin). The temple installed these stones as a reminder for worshippers to be humble and respectful when entering the premises.



Next, visit [Swee Kow Kuan Temple](#), located next to Chu Sheng Temple. Established in 1905 at Buona Vista, Swee Kow Kuan is a temple for those with the surname Hong. On the right side of the temple, you can see a stone stele on which is inscribed the year the temple was built and the names of its founding donors.



Walk back to Yio Chu Kang MRT and take the train to Ang Mo Kio MRT. Walk to [Ang Mo Kio Town Garden East](#), which is behind the station. Completed in 1981, this town garden was originally part of a larger area known as Cheng San ("green hills" in Hokkien). Around the park, you can see rubber seed sculptures, which were installed to evoke memories of the former rubber plantations in this area.

Proceed to the junction between Ang Mo Kio Central 1 and Ang Mo Kio Avenue 3. Nestled in the shrubs are tomato sculptures which



were installed in 2000. These sculptures are tongue-in-cheek references to the theory that Ang Mo Kio took its name from the local Hokkien term for tomatoes.

Take a bus, alight at Ang Mo Kio Ave 3 and walk to [Ang Mo Kio Joint Temple](#). This temple houses three older temples from former villages in Ang Mo Kio, was rebuilt in 2011. On the pillars and facade of the building, you can see intricate carvings, which were hand crafted by artisans in China. Within one of the temples, Gao Lin Gong, you can also see a carved wooden stand, which was commissioned in 1888 to mark the temple's founding.



Then, walk down Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1 to the entrance to Block 218. Flanking the entrance to the carpark is a pair of 2.5-metre-tall stone Merlion sculptures. Commissioned in 1998 by the Residents' Committee in Ang Mo Kio, these are the only Merlions to be found in Singapore's heartlands.



Lastly, take a bus and alight at [Church of Christ the King](#). Founded in 1982 and rebuilt in 2002, the church has an iconic statue of Christ the King on its front balcony. This statue was commissioned in 1956 and sculpted in Kerala, India.



SCENIC FRINGES

2.5 hours with public transport, 12 km

From private housing estates built in the 1950s and 1960s to serene greenery, the fringes of the bustling Ang Mo Kio showcase another side of the new town and its surroundings. This trail takes you on a scenic route to explore the outskirts of Ang Mo Kio.

Start the trail at [Lower Peirce Reservoir](#), Singapore's second impounding reservoir. Originally known as Kalang River Reservoir, it was completed in 1910 and officially opened in 1912. During its opening, an inscription stone imported from Aswan, Egypt, was erected and



it remains standing at the reservoir to this day. The reservoir was renamed in honour of the municipal engineer, Robert Peirce, who drew up the plans for the project in 1922.

Cross Upper Thomson Road to the next stop, [Sembawang Hills Estate](#). Formerly a rubber plantation, Sembawang Hills Estate was jointly developed in the 1950s by Bukit Sembawang Rubber Estates and Singapore United Rubber Estates, rubber companies which expanded into housing development as rubber production declined. While there, look out for the iconic old taxi stand and stone bench with the old service number inscribed, said to have been built in the 1960s. Here, you may grab a bite at Plum Village Restaurant, the oldest Hakka restaurant in Singapore, for authentic Hakka fare.



From here, walk northwards through Sembawang Hills to [Teachers' Housing Estate](#) along Yio Chu Kang Road. Built in the late 1960s by Singapore Teachers' Union, the estate's first residents were mostly teachers



and their families. Roads in the estate were named after poets and writers such as Tu Fu, Rabindranath Tagore and Munshi Abdullah.

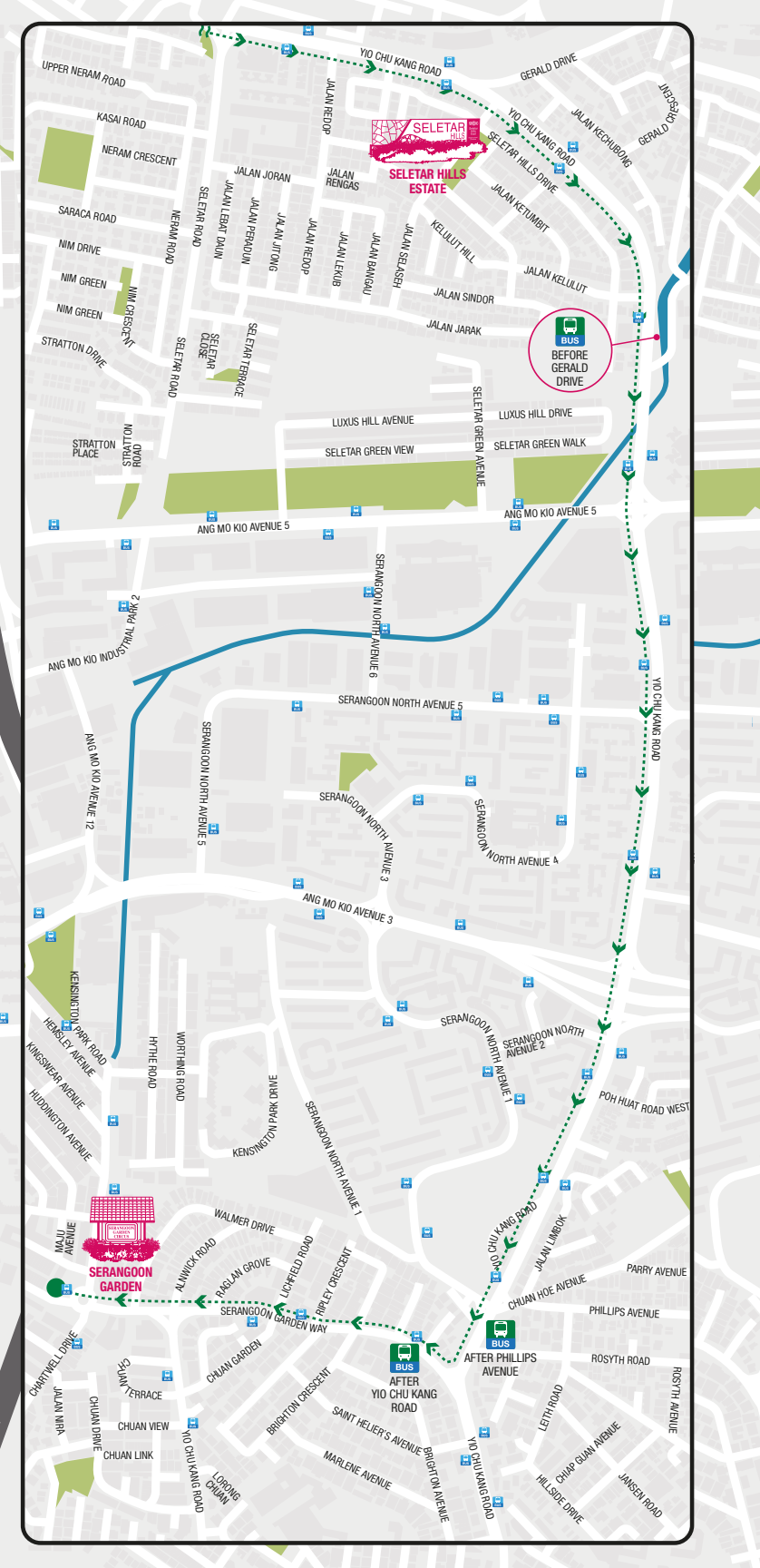
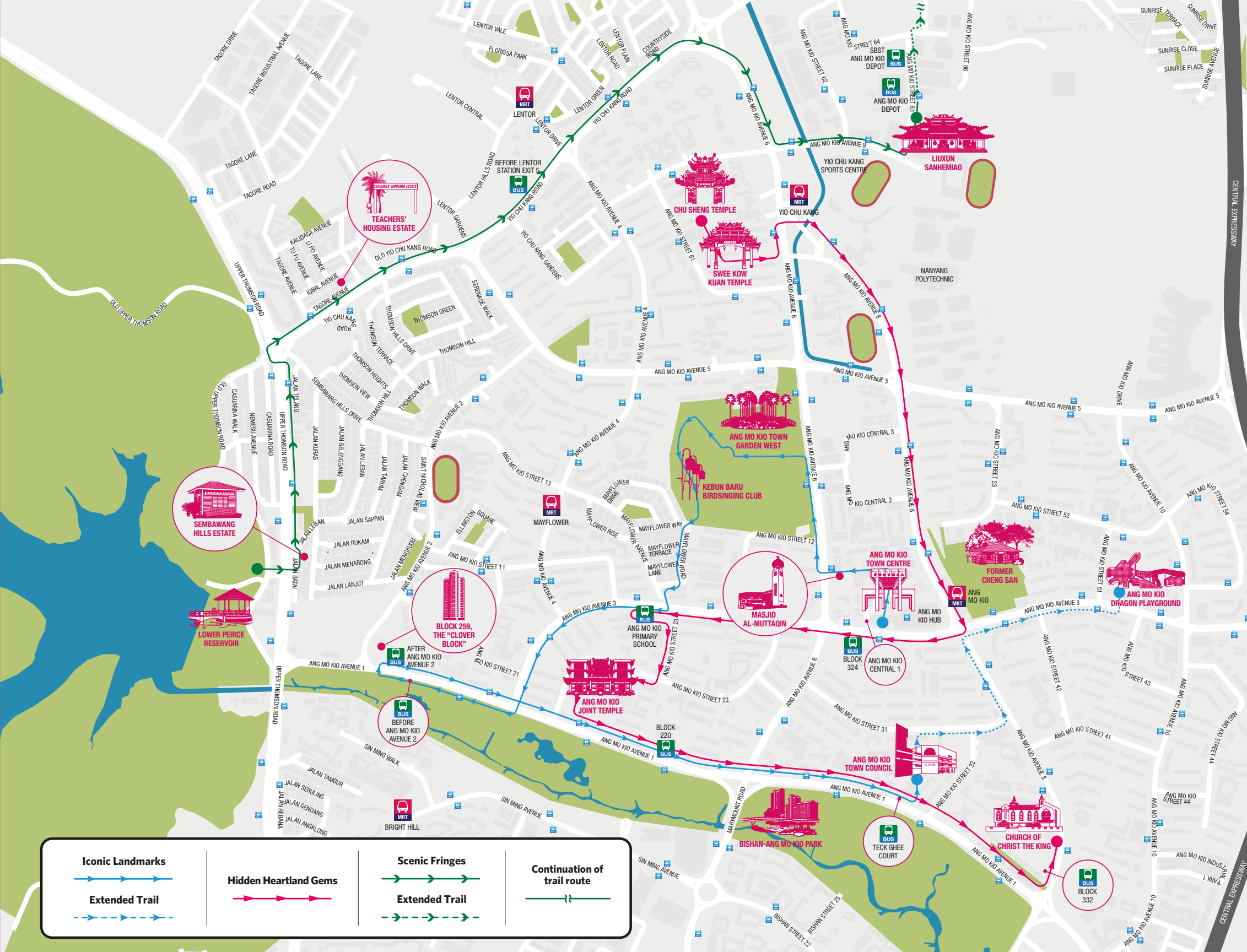
Finally, take a bus at Yio Chu Kang Road and alight at [Liuxun Sanhemiao](#). Completed in 1989, the temple houses three older temples formerly from a village known as Lak Xun, located in Yio Chu Kang. In the 1980s, the villagers were resettled, and the temples were combined and relocated to their current premise in Ang Mo Kio.



Optional: Take a bus down Yio Chu Kang Road and stop by [Seletar Hills Estate](#). Developed in the 1950s by Singapore United Estates, a subsidiary of Singapore United Rubber Plantations Ltd, Seletar Hills Estate was built after the success of Sembawang Hills Estate. Along the way, stop by Sam Mui Kuang

Pottery, one of the first pottery businesses to be established in Singapore. You may also want to take the bus and end your exploration at [Serangoon Garden](#), another private housing estate built in the 1950s that has since become a well-known food haven.





Iconic Landmarks → → → →	Hidden Heartland Gems → → → →	Scenic Fringes → → → →	Continuation of trail route → → → →
Extended Trail → → → →		Extended Trail → → → →	



*Lower Peirce Reservoir, 2023
Courtesy of National Heritage Board*

The Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail is part of the National Heritage Board's ongoing efforts to document and present the history and social memories of places in Singapore. We hope this trail will bring back fond memories for those who have worked, lived or played in the area, and serve as a useful source of information for visitors and new residents.

Supported by



*View of Ang Mo Kio new town with Block 259 on the left, 1987
Courtesy of National Archives Singapore*